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THE SONG OF ROLAND

THE SONG OF ROLAND

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH VERSE BY

JOHN O'HAGAN, M.A.

ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S COUNSEL

2254

Dopo la dolorosa rotta, quando
Carlo Magno perdè la santa gesta
Non sonò si terribilmente Orlando
Inferno, xxxi.

LL.i.33.

LONDON
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1880

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INTRODUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

CHARLEMAGNE has had the fortune, unique so far as I know, of being a hero both of history and of fable. The one character seems in general to exclude the other. Achilles, Odin, the Cid, King Arthur, Cuchullin, whose achievements are unknown, whose existence has been questioned, have been the centres of the greatest cycles of legendary romance. On the other hand, is it not at first thought surprising that a figure so dazzling and romantic as Alexander the Great, whose recorded exploits may vie with those of the hero of the Iliad, whom he envied, never became the theme of popular song? * The same may be said of Hannibal, of Julius Cæsar, and Napoleon. Charlemagne, the conqueror and king, the legislator and civilizer,

The legendary Charlemagne.

* That is, in Europe. The fact that Alexander became a hero of Eastern legend tends to confirm the view I put forward here.

the founder of the new Roman Empire which lasted a thousand years, is also the source and centre of a legendary cycle of enormous and far-spreading growth, forming for centuries the delight of the nations of Central Europe, and as its latest expression giving birth to the masterpieces of Italian poetry.

So much has been written on the origin and growth of legend, that it would be unpardonable to dwell upon the subject. Its cradle is the imagination of an unlettered people. Their minds, like those of children, delight in marvels, and yield them an eager credence. First come ballads of rude and simple structure; new incidents, new personages are added year after year by the fancies of a hundred unknown bards, until it may come to pass, possibly after centuries, that this floating ballad-lore is seized on by the genius of some great poet, and, while faith in the legend as yet survives, is embodied in some immortal poem. Thus the ballad is crystallized into the epic. So was it with the Iliad; so, in their degree, was it with the early ballads concerning Charlemagne and his heroes.

The "Chanson de Roland," which I have ventured to translate, is the outcome of ruder lays which have perished. It was composed, according to all probability, about the end of the eleventh or the

beginning of the twelfth century. Its hero is Roland, the Christian Achilles.

It was Charlemagne's fortune to come between two civilizations—the expiring civilization of Rome, and the nascent civilization of feudal Christendom. His passion for letters and science is well known, and he gathered round him the foremost clerks of his age. But the great mass of his people were, I need hardly say, as unlettered as they were rude in manners and simple in faith; and, what is still more to the purpose, the two centuries which immediately succeeded were darker than his own. So when his towering figure and marvellous exploits struck full upon the hearts of his contemporaries, there existed all the elements for the growth of a *sylva* of legends. If he had lived in, still more if he had been followed by, a time of literary cultivation, this could hardly have taken place. The beginnings, the early germs, might have come into existence, for at all times the great mass of mankind are ignorant and imaginative; but those germs would have withered and died in face of the facts. At such a time mere fiction, the conscious falsification of the known facts of history (unless done in sport and playfulness), would have been abhorrent to creative genius, which, by its very nature, lives in what it believes to be true. This may be illustrated by reverting for a moment to Napoleon. A good deal

has been said of late of the Napoleonic legend. But the songs of Béranger are in no true sense legendary, any more than the prose of Thiers. The incidents told with such simple pathos in "Les Souvenirs du Peuple," might have actually happened without violation of probability during the war of 1814. Yet there were unquestionably in France the beginnings and sproutings of a genuine Napoleonic mythus. A lamented friend of mine, years ago, heard among the peasants of Picardy that Wellington had been a pupil and officer of Napoleon, and had learned from him the secret of success in war, which he afterwards turned treacherously against his master. Give ideas of this kind two or three illiterate centuries to grow and expatiate in, and one can well fancy what a wealth of legendary lore might have gathered round the name of Napoleon. His marshals would have been peers and paladins, each with his garland of ballads, and each credited with some marvellous incident of birth and with impossible adventures. Bourmont would have been as Ganelon, and the tale of Waterloo would have rivalled the tale of Roncesvalles. But the growth of such a legend is impossible in our time, simply because the germs of it are destroyed in the mind of every Frenchman who learns to read. The legends concerning Charlemagne and his peers ran little risk of being thus nipped in

the bud. His actual achievements are given to us in the admirable biography written by his secretary, Eginhard, and in the later and less authentic narrative of the Monk of St. Gall. But these histories, enshrined in a language read by clerks alone, had no influence on the wild ballad-lore of the people, which went its own way. Thus, the double part which Charlemagne fills may be accounted for.

The earlier ballads—all, in fact, anterior to this "Song of Roland"—have perished. The very language in which they originally existed has been a subject of controversy. It has been insisted with good show of reason that, as Charlemagne was a Frankish king of the Austrasian race of Pepin of Heristal, speaking, he and his warriors, a Teutonic dialect, it must have been in that language that the admiration for him first broke forth in song. This is, of course, highly probable, though not a fragment remains to attest it. On the other hand, the Franks had been conquerors of a great part of Roman Gaul for more than three hundred years. Multitudes of Charlemagne's soldiers and servants must have spoken one of the dialects of the *lingua Romana*, and as we find that language so to speak in possession, as being the vehicle of all the succeeding poetry, there is no reason to suppose any transfusion of the ballads from the Teuton into Gaulish

Was the legend originally Teutonic or Gaulish?

Latin. The probabilities are that they existed in both languages, possibly even in the lifetime of Charlemagne.

But whether Teuton or Roman, or both, no remains of these primitive chants are now known to exist. They must have been almost wholly unwritten; and their very memory would have perished if it had not been preserved both in the allusions of contemporary Latin writers, and in the larger *chansons de geste*—the quasi epics—into which they became fused. Of these, as I said, the earliest in date, and confessedly the first in merit, is the "Chanson de Roland." Of the others the name is literally legion, and I need but refer my readers to the interesting, and almost exhaustive work of M. Gaston Paris, "L'Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne."*

The disaster of Roncesvalles.

Most singular, too, is the point in the history of Charlemagne which became the theme of the deepest interest—the disaster which befell his rear-guard at Roncesvalles. There is no doubt of the reality of the occurrence. It is told briefly, and almost baldly, but with an obvious fidelity to fact, by Eginhard. It came to pass in this way:—In the year 777 Charlemagne had convoked at Paderborn an assembly of the various

* "Histoire Poétique de Charlemagne," par Gaston Paris. Paris, A. Franck, 1865.

nations which were subject to his sceptre. Thither came before him, as a suppliant, Ibn-el-Arabi, the Saracen governor of Saragossa. He came to implore the aid of the great King of the Franks, against Abderahman, the Ommiad Usurper, whose genius and daring had made him all but master of Spain. Charlemagne eagerly grasped at the occasion. Possibly he might win and keep some Spanish cities; possibly alleviate the condition of the Christians—in any case, there were influence and glory to be gained; so he assembled a mighty army, and in the spring of 778 marched towards the Pyrenees. He crossed them, passing through the Vale of Roncesvalles, took Pampeluna, and moved straight upon Saragossa. But there his good fortune ended. The presence of the detested unbeliever had united all factions of the Moslem. Saragossa made a desperate defence. The Franks failed to capture it, and a negociation ensued. Charlemagne, according to the chronicles, received large presents of gold, with hostages, and promises of fidelity. In any case, he raised the siege, and marched towards France, levelling with the ground the walls of Pampeluna on his way. But when, with the van of his army, he had passed through the defiles, a new enemy, the Basques, or Gascons, of the mountains, assailed his rear. The result may be given in the very words of Eginhard.

"The king brought back his army safe and undiminished, save that in passing the heights of the Pyrenees, on his return, he had to suffer somewhat from the perfidy of the Basques. For while the army, compelled thereto by the nature of the ground and the straightness of the defile, marched in a long and narrow line, the Basques, who lay in ambush on the crest of the mountain (for the denseness of the abundant forest was favourable to ambuscades), rushed suddenly from the heights on the men who were stationed in the rear-guard to protect those in front. The Basques cast them down into the valley beneath, and in the battle that ensued slew them to the last man. Having pillaged the baggage they made their escape, and rapidly dispersed under favour of the night which was now drawing on. The success of the Basques was greatly due to the lightness of their arms and the character of the ground. The Franks, on the other hand, heavily armed, and placed in an unfavourable position, were in every respect an unequal match for their enemies. In this battle perished Aeggihard, provost of the royal table; Anselm, count of the palace; and Roland (Hruotlandus), prefect of the March of Brittany. There was no means of taking vengeance for this blow; for the enemy dispersed so rapidly that no information could be had of the place where they were to be found."

Eginhard.

Eginhard relates the same disaster in his Annals, and adds, that this defeat almost effaced in the heart of the king all his joy for his Spanish conquests.

"*Hruotlandus, prefect of the March of Brittany*," Lord Warden of the Marches. He had performed, no doubt sternly and valiantly, the part of some "Belted Will," upon the Breton border, delivering his commands in brief Teutonic gutturals. He accompanied his liege upon this Spanish expedition, and perished in the Gascon ambuscade. This is all that authentic history can tell us of a name that has filled a thousand romances. Charlemagne at the epoch of this disaster was thirty-six years of age. Roland, if any credit can be accorded to an epitaph given by the pseudo-Turpin, was thirty-eight or forty-two.*

The Roland of history.

These ages of the king and his prefect of the March strike us in strange contrast with the Charlemagne and Roland of song. But in all respects the transformation was complete. I proceed to denote briefly the points of divergence between the history and the legend.

Diver-gences between the history and the legend.

* Sed qui lustra tenes octo et binos super annos,
Ereptus terris, justus ad astra redis.

These are the concluding lines of the epitaph. In Signor Ciampi's edition of the Turpin the first of the above lines runs thus:

Sex qui lustra gerens, octo bonus insuper annos.

1. The enemy by whom the rear-guard was overthrown, instead of the barbarous Gascons of the hills, became the great Mohammedan power of Spain. In fact, what other power could the ninth, or tenth, or eleventh century conceive of as a match for the mighty Karl? In a time when the imaginations of men were filled either with terror of Saracen invasion, or with the enthusiastic spirit of the Crusades, all other differences seemed lost in the conflict of Christian and Moslem. So it was Marsilius, the Saracen king of Saragossa, who, with a force outnumbering twenty-fold "the marvellous little company" of the Christians, lay in wait for and destroyed the rear-guard of Karl.

The enemy became the Saracens, not the Basques.

2. Charlemagne, instead of being in the strength of early manhood, is in the extreme of old age, but an old age still green and vigorous; his white beard flows down over mail and belt. *Cruda viro viridisque senectus.* His enemies deemed his age something superhuman, reckoning him to have lived two hundred years. His aspect is so striking and majestic that none who seek him may mistake him. As presented to us in the Roland, he is the ideal of a king. The enthusiastic reverence with which he is regarded by his peers and warriors is absolutely unbounded. Even the traitor Ganelon

Charlemagne of advanced age, not early manhood.

His legendary characteristics.

has no word for him but that he is the noblest and most princely of men, whose vassalage he would rather die than forsake. The greatest sorrow of Archbishop Turpin, when dying, is that he will look upon his emperor never more. Like all great commanders of men, Karl is extremely tolerant of freedom of speech, even of open contradiction; but exacts the most unquestioning obedience to his commands; and he combines a terrible, and even savage sternness with the utmost warmth and tenderness of heart.

His supposed conquest of Spain.

3. It was not a sudden incursion of Karl into Spain that gave birth to the disaster. He had been there for seven years, and had conquered the high land, as far as to the sea, save the city of Saragossa alone. His retreat into France was induced, not by any failure of his enterprise, but by the perfidious prayers and tears, the feigned submission and promised conversion, of the Paynim king, aided by the treason of the near connection and bosom counsellor of Karl.

The treason of Ganelon.

4. For how was it possible that such a calamity could have befallen a host of Christian and Frankish warriors otherwise than by treason? How often in later ages has the cry, "On nous a trahi" resounded after a French defeat! The traitor of Roncesvalles was Ganelon. Readers of the

Italian poets, who in the fifteenth century turned this theme into one of sportive and delightful romance, must remember his name in its various forms—Gan, Gano, Ganellone.* In them, and, indeed, in all the later versions of the legend, he is depicted as the very type of a low, sordid soul, intrinsically base-minded and treacherous. "E Gan fu traditor prima che nato," says Pulci. Very different, and of a high poetical conception, is the Ganelon of the "Song of Roland." By birth among the noblest, wedded to the sister of Charlemagne, and step-father of Roland, he is no less distinguished by his splendid person and knightly valour, than by a genuine love and loyalty to Karl. His own retainers and kinsmen entertain for him the deepest devotion; his treason springs from outraged pride. His step-son Roland treats him with a height of scorn and *outrecuidance*, which rankles deeply in his breast. Ganelon suspects Roland of naming him ambassador to the Saracen, in the hope that he might be slain, as former envoys had been. He has persuaded himself, moreover,

* There was a Ganilo, or Wenilo, Archbishop of Sens, about seventy years after Roncesvalles, who was accused of treachery towards Charles the Bald, and it has been conjectured that his name, having become a kind of synonym of treason, was bestowed on the legendary betrayer of Charlemagne. See preface to M. Genin's edition of the "Song of Roland," p. xxxv. All this is extremely obscure.

that Roland is the evil genius of Karl, for ever inciting him to new wars and conquests; and that France, the great land (*tere majur*), would never see peace while Roland lived. So he plotted with the Saracen how Roland should be cut off while leading the rear guard of the Franks on their return to France. It is true (and surely natural) that the character of Ganelon becomes debased as the consequence of his crime. He accepts the gifts of the Saracen. He lies unblushingly to the emperor.* But even to the end he maintains that his act was one of vengeance on his personal enemy, not of treason to his king.

5. Karl has twelve chosen nobles and warriors, who are named his *peers*. The term Paladin (Palatinus), so common in the later *chansons de geste*, is not found in this poem. The captain of the twelve is Roland, whom fiction has made the nephew of Charlemagne. He is in the prime and strength of youth, the bright consummate flower of Frankish chivalry. He has often been named the Christian Achilles, and certainly, considering the almost impossibility of the author having read the Iliad, there is something very striking in the traits of resemblance. Fearless and adventurous to

The peers.

Roland.

* The reader need hardly be reminded that, in fact, Charlemagne did not become emperor for more than twenty years after Roncesvalles. But in the poem he is emperor as well as king throughout.

the extremity of daring, Roland, like Achilles, is marked by the sin of pride and presumption. He is doubly the cause of the disaster in which he fell; first by his scorn of Ganelon, and again by his haughty refusal to wind his horn to apprize Charlemagne of the danger in which the rear-guard stood. "It shall never be spoken of me by living man, that for any heathen I sounded my horn. Never shall I bring such shame upon my race." Like Achilles, too, he is bound in the closest and tenderest ties of friendship.

Olivier.

His Patroclus is Olivier, the gallant and the sage, whose prudence always stands in contrast with the fiery recklessness of Roland. They were to have been further bound by ties of affinity, for Roland was betrothed to the fair Alda, sister of Olivier. They have but one quarrel. When Roland at last resolves to sound that horn whose timely blast would have been their salvation, Olivier, seeing the ruin that has been wrought, cannot refrain from bitterly reproaching his comrade; Roland accepts his rebuke with all humility, and Archbishop Turpin reconciles them to one another. There are, I think, few things in poetry more touching than the passage where Olivier, wounded to death and blinded by the blood which streams down his forehead, strikes out darkly and smites the helm of Roland, who had ridden to

his side: "My comrade, thou didst it not wittingly. I am thy Roland, who have loved thee so dearly." "I hear thee," said Olivier, "but I see thee not; God seeth thee. Have I then struck thee? Forgive it me." And they bent their heads and laid them together, and made their parting in great love.

Of the remaining ten peers, the names differ in the various gestes. In the "Chanson de Roland," they are Gerein, Gerier, Berengier, Otho, Duke Samson, Engelier of Bordeaux, Ivon, Ivor, Anseis, and Gerard of Roussillon. All perform great deeds of valour, and all are slain at Roncesvalles; but none of them has any individuality of character. "Fortemque Gyan, fortemque Cloanthum."

It is otherwise with Archbishop Turpin, who, next to Roland and Charlemagne, is by far the most striking figure in the poem. There is no doubt that an actual Archbishop Turpin, or Tylpin, held the episcopal chair of Rheims during the last quarter of the eighth century; and that he may have been intimate with and highly prized by Charlemagne is, of course, probable. But he certainly was not one of the victims of Roncesvalles, as he lived for years afterwards, and there is no evidence of his having had martial tastes at all. But in the poem, he is the type and impersonation of a warrior ecclesiastic of the middle ages. "In battles and with sermons he

Turpin.

was ever a champion against the heathen." When he blesses the army and gives them absolution before the battle, the penance he enjoins them is to strike. When we read the account of his death, and those of Olivier and Roland, it is impossible not to feel what beauty and tenderness Christianity has conferred upon poetry. If any one object to the gallant Bishop as uncanonical, I would remind him that the war was a holy one against "felon Paynims;" and without citing the Bishop of Beauvais and his coat, we may remember how Heber Macmahon, two centuries ago, took the place of Owen Roe, as commander of the Irish army. And, if I mistake not, there was a fighting bishop within the present generation, as proud of the achievements of his rifle as ever Turpin was of his sword *Almace*.

The pseudo-Turpin.

But the name of Turpin has been sorely abused. A century or more after he had died in his see of Rheims, there appeared a narrative of the exploits of Charlemagne, written in Latin, and evidently the work of ecclesiastical hands. To this production the writer, or writers, gave the name of Archbishop Turpin as the author; "Ego Turpinus, Archiepiscopus."* Written

* "De Vitâ Caroli Magni et Rolandi. Historia Joanni Turpino Remensi Episcopo vulgo tributa ad fidem Codicis vetustioris emendata," a Sebastiano Ciampi, Florentiæ, 1822.

in the vile ambitious style which was then current, it presents, first, a number of the religious legends concerning Charlemagne, especially as regards the shrine of S. Iago di Compostella; and secondly, the legends of his warlike exploits, borrowed in great part from the Song of Roland. The story of Roncesvalles, of course, is told; but the archbishop, being the supposed narrator, is not one of the victims, but miraculously escapes.

This fiction had a truly marvellous success. In an age wholly uncritical, it was accepted as the genuine work of the archbishop, and in time, as the lays and chansons grew more and more obsolete, it was regarded as the source from which all the Carlovingian legends flowed. And the imaginary Turpin was made to answer for even more than his own sins. Whenever Pulci or Ariosto tells some astounding extravagance, far beyond the common, the poet generally goes on to say, "You may not believe this; all I can tell you is, so is it written in Turpin." So when mockery succeeded to credulity, the good archbishop came to be looked on as the prince of fictionmongers.

6. Another point in which the poem has parted company with historical truth is as to the revengeance taken by Charlemagne for his

The reprisals.

* M. Gaston Paris has written an elaborate essay on the "Pseudo-Turpin," which he attributes to more authors than one. "De Pseudo-Turpino." Disseruit Gaston Paris. Parisii, 1865.

defeat. We have seen that he was unable to lay hands on the Gascons, who dispersed into their mountain fastnesses. In truth, the only vengeance he took was by hanging Duke Lupus of Acquitaine, whom he suspected of having devised the treachery. But in the poem, Charlemagne marches to Roncesvalles with the main body of his army, when he hears the mighty note of the horn which Roland sounded when he was near his end. The reader will remember the passage in Marmion:

> "O, for a blast of that dread horn
> On Fontarabian echoes borne,
> That to King Charles did come,
> When Roland brave and Olivier,
> And every paladin and peer,
> On Roncesvalles died."

The incident of the horn is so striking that one cannot help believing it must have some foundation in truth, and that Hruotlandus, brought to bay by his savage foes, blew upon his "*Olifant*" (horn of the elephant's tusk) some prodigious blast, which came to the ears of the rearmost of the main body. In the poem the ghastly note is made to resound for fifteen leagues. Karl, notwithstanding the lying dissuasions of Ganelon, feels that his nephew is in battle and in jeopardy. He turns at once with all his army, and arrives at Roncesvalles. Alas! too late; not one of his peers, not a Frank of the rear-guard, was left alive. He has

but little time for lamentation. God works for him a miracle, as for Joshua—makes "the sun stand still in heaven," while Charlemagne is urged by the "angel who is wont to speak with him" to pursue the heathen and take swift vengeance.

Karl pursues them; slays or drives them into the river Ebro; returns to Roncesvalles, where he makes a long and touching lament over Roland; brings his body, and those of Olivier and Turpin, to Blaye, and deposits them in the shrine of Saint Romanus. He then proceeds to Aix-la-Chapelle, leading Ganelon in chains. The poem ends with the trial of Ganelon, who haughtily maintains his innocence, and whose kinsmen demand that it shall be adjudged by arms. A judicial combat ensues between Pinabel, the "friend and peer" of Ganelon, and Thierry of Anjou, the king's champion. Thierry at the last is victor; Ganelon is torn in pieces by wild horses, and thirty of his kindred who had been his bailsmen are hanged. Queen Bramimonde is converted to Christianity; the angel appears again to Charlemagne, commanding him to undertake a new expedition to the East; the emperor tearing his beard to think "what an unresting life is his." So the poem ends.

There is, however, a portion of the poem of which I have not yet spoken, and which I have omitted in the translation. It is the episode of the Emir Baligant. The episode of the Emir Baligant.

In the year that Charlemagne had invaded Spain, King Marsil, foreseeing the disaster which might befall him, had sent an embassy to his suzerain Baligant, the Emir of Babylon, imploring succour. The distance was so great, and the delay so long, that it was not until the seventh year that Baligant reached Spain with an immense army formed of innumerable heathen nations.

Among these it is curious to find the Prussians and Sclavonians. The ravages of the wild Borussian pagans had reached the ear of the trouvère; and, heathen for heathen, he recked of little difference between north and east. However, Baligant arrives before Saragossa, only in time to learn of the calamity that had befallen his vassal. True, the rear-guard of the Christians, and all the twelve peers, had been slain, but the emperor had taken fearful vengeance, and the whole army of Marsil was annihilated. His son Jurfalez was slain, and he himself lay in anguish, maimed of his right hand. The queen was already abjuring her gods as faithless and impotent. The Emir promises a speedy reprisal, and marches out with his army against Karl. They met in an open plain. "Between them there was neither hill, nor valley, nor mound, neither forest nor wood. Hidden they might not be." The Emir divides his nations into thirty battalions, the emperor his army into ten. It may be

interesting to state them, as indicating the conceived extent of the dominion of Charlemagne.

The first two were of Franks, each of fifteen thousand men; the third, Bavarians; the fourth, Almains of the Marches; the fifth, the Normans with Count Richard at their head; the sixth are Bretons; the seventh, the men of Poitou and Auvergne; the eighth, Flemings and Frisians; the ninth, Burgundians and Lorrainers; the tenth, a hundred thousand of the warriors of France; and at the head Geoffrey of Anjou, who bore the oriflamme.

In the battle the heathens, I need hardly say, are routed with slaughter, Charlemagne slaying the Emir with his own hand. After this battle he captures Saragossa. Marsil dies of anguish. The inhabitants have the choice of baptism or the sword, and the queen is led off a prisoner.

It has been much disputed whether this episode is a part of the original poem or a subsequent interpolation. M. d'Avril, who has published a modern version of the poem in the series called "Livres pour Tous," maintains the latter opinion, and has accordingly left it out. M. Léon Gautier, whose labours on the subject of this poem are beyond price, adopts the former view, and slow indeed should I be to venture to differ from him. But, in any case, I cannot help regarding it as a blemish. It interrupts the natural march of the narra-

tive, and there is a good deal of it that resembles a mere variation of the incidents of the battle of Roncesvalles.

Indeed, at Roncesvalles itself, the details of the killing, though undoubtedly Homeric, become a little monotonous; and it would, I fear, be wearisome to the English reader to have them repeated in the narrative of the battle before Saragossa. I have not, I think, done great wrong in omitting it.

The MS. of the "Chanson de Roland."

To turn now to what I may call the external history and features of this poem. The manuscript is in the Bodleian Library, and marked "Digby, 23." It is apparently the writing of a scribe of the middle of the twelfth century, between 1150 and 1160, thinks M. Gautier. A small octavo, the leaves vellum, the writing mediocre enough, without a pretence to caligraphy; it formed a volume suitable to be carried in the pocket of a jongleur, to read from or refresh his memory by. It had belonged to the famous Sir Kenelm Digby, and was given by him to the Bodleian in 1634, with over two hundred other manuscripts. Surely the French owe a debt of immortal gratitude to Sir Kenelm, who was the means of preserving the solitary copy known to exist of what they now claim as their true epic. It lay for two centuries in the Bodleian, forgotten and unnoticed. Tyrwhitt, the editor of Chaucer, saw it, and

there is a passing reference to it in a note to his edition. In 1817 Mr. J. F. Conybeare, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, referred to it as the earliest specimen of the *chansons de geste* known to exist among the manuscript treasures of our libraries. But it was not given to the world until 1837. It was transcribed and edited by M. Francisque Michel, who had been sent over to Oxford by M. Guizot with that mission. Its publication was an era in French literature. It was received with the utmost enthusiasm, and the interest which it awakened is testified by the number of editions it has gone through in France and Germany, and the learning and research which have been devoted to its elucidation.*

In 1878 Herr Edmund Stengel published an exact transcript of the original, with all its contractions, errors, and lacunæ. He gives a photograph facsimile of two pages of the original.† Moreover, he photographed the entire poem, from beginning to end. Of this photographic edition he has published a limited number of copies. Other editors in Germany are Ed. Boehmer and Th. Müller.

It would be wearisome to detail the several French

* See in the Introduction to the assonant translation of M. Petit de Julleville, the "Liste Chronologique des Ouvrages Consacrés à la Chanson de Roland."

† "Das Altfranzösische Rolandslied." Besorgt von Edmund Stengel. Heilbronn, 1878.

editions. First amongst them all may be named the edition of M. Léon Gautier, who has devoted to his task not only a wonderful familiarity with the subject, but all the untiring patience which springs from a genuine enthusiasm.

The language. The language of the "Roland" is the *langue d'oil* —the language of the north and centre of France, as distinguished from the *langue d'oc* of the south.

Time of composition. The precise date of its composition is unsettled. It was most probably the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century. Many have assumed that it was a portion of this very poem which Taillefer, the jongleur, chanted when he leaped ashore, and when he flung his sword into the air at the beginning of the battle of Hastings. If this be so, the composition must, of course, have been anterior to the Conquest. This song of Taillefer is mentioned by William of Malmesbury and Matthew Paris, and still more explicitly by Robert Wace, the poet of the "Roman de Rou" ("Lay of Rollo").

The passage from Wace is as follows :—

"Taillefer qui moult bien cantoit
Sur un roncier qui tost aloit
Devant eux s'en' aloit cantant
De Carlemagne et de Rolant,
Et d'Olivier et des Vassaux
Qui moururent en Roncesvaux."

"Taillefer, who right well sang, mounted on his rapid steed, went before them, singing of Charlemagne, and of Roland and Olivier and of the vassals who died in Roncesvalles." And the passage which follows reads like a bit of the "Song of Roland" itself:—

"Sire, dit Taillefer, merchi,
Je vus ai lungement servi
Tut mun servise me devez
Hui se vos plait me le rendrez
Pur tut guerredun vus requier
Et si vos voil forment preier
Otriez me ke jeo n'y faille
Le premier colp de la bataille
Et li duc respunt jeo l'otrei."

"Sire," said Taillefer, "a boon. I have served you long. You owe me a debt for all my service; and you can repay it to me this day. Grant, and deny me not, to strike the first stroke in the battle." "I grant it thee," replied the duke.

Taillefer may, of course, have chanted some earlier lay of Roland. M. Gautier has come to the conclusion that the author of the poem was certainly a Norman; and probably a Norman who accompanied William to England, or who lived there shortly after. His chief reason for believing him to have been a Norman is the great prominence given to Saint Michael the Archangel, under the name of "Saint Michael of Peril." This, he conceives, plainly refers to the famous Mont St.

Conjectures as to the author.

Michel, on the Norman coast, where the feast of the apparition of the archangel to St. Aubert is kept on the 16th of October. The pilgrimages to this shrine are termed in the Chronicles contemporary with our poem, "Ad montem Sancti Michaelis de Periculo Maris!" The phrase "Saint Michael of Peril," M. Gautier thinks, would never have occurred to any writer other than a Norman. The grounds for supposing him to be an Anglo-Norman are the references to England in the poem; the fact of the solitary manuscript which exists having been found in England; of two copies of a poem on Roncesvalles having been formerly in the cathedral of Peterborough, as appears by a catalogue which has been preserved; and by the use of the word "algier" for javelin, which is supposed to have been derived from the Anglo-Saxon *ategar*.

All this, it must be owned, is very slight and conjectural. The last line of the poem is—

"Ci falt la geste que Turoldus declinet."

"Here endeth the geste which Turoldus related" (or completed).

Now, there was a Theroulde who was the preceptor of William the Conqueror, and this Theroulde had a son of the same name, whom William made successively Abbot of Malmesbury and Abbot of Peterborough. The similarity of name, coupled with the fact which I have referred to, of a poem on

Roncesvaux having been once in the library of Peterborough, have led M. Genin almost unhesitatingly to the conclusion that the book is that either of the father or the son.* But, again, is not this the merest surmise? Accepting, then, implicitly the conclusion drawn by critics, who have devoted the most conscientious labour to this task, that the language shows the date to have been the end of the eleventh or the beginning of the twelfth century, we are absolutely in the dark as to the author. One thing, however, I may say; with all respect for M. Genin, I doubt whether the poem was the work of an ecclesiastic. Devout it is, and displays a deep and tender faith; but it is absolutely untheological. Let any one read the beginning of the "Pseudo-Turpin," and he will feel clearly what I mean. A cleric would not have been likely to give such prominence to the fighting over the preaching qualities of the archbishop. We should have had more matter tending directly to edification; and the reasons by which the Saracen queen was converted to Christianity would hardly have been omitted. The Scriptural allusions, and the references to saints and angels, are nothing more than would have been elementary knowledge with

* "La Chanson de Roland Poeme de Theroulde. Texte critique accompagne d'une traduction d'une introduction et de notes," par F. Genin. Paris, 1850.

laymen of that age. It was more probably the work of one who, like Taillefer himself, was at once minstrel and warrior.

The metre. The metre is decasyllabic, the same as in Chaucer; the same which we have preserved in our heroic measure, but which the French, unfortunately, as many have thought, afterwards discarded for the longer Alexandrine. Of the grammar, I think it out of place to speak. Those who may take a philological interest in the poem will find abundant and superabundant materials in what has been written on this theme in France and Germany.

The poem is divided into stanzas or leashes (*laisses*) of very unequal length, each stanza having the same rhyme throughout. The rhyme is not a perfect rhyme in our sense; it is the assonant, or vowel rhyme; "Vele,' for example, rhyming with "perdent," and "tere" with "feste." This assonant rhyme, which quite satisfies an uneducated ear, appears to have been universal among European nations in the early stage of their civilization. It is almost the only species of rhyme known in Celtic poetry, and it long remained a feature even of Irish ballads written in the English tongue. The "Groves of Blarney" is, of course, a burlesque, but even as a burlesque it gives a specimen of the kind of rhyme existing in the compositions which it ridiculed. But

The assonant rhyme.

it is in Spanish that the use of the assonant rhyme became most domesticated, for it was adopted by the authors who are their recognized classics. The greater part of Calderon is written in assonants. Upon this subject I need only refer to Mr. MacCarthy's wonderful translations from that poet, to whose fidelity Mr. Ticknor bore the following testimony:—

"In this point of view, your volume seems to me little less than marvellous. If I had not read it—if I had not carefully gone through with the *Dévocion de la Cruz*, I should not have believed it possible to do what you have done. Titian, they say, and some others of the old masters, laid on colours for their groundwork wholly different from those they used afterwards, but which they counted upon to shine through and contribute materially to the grand results they produced. So in your translations, the Spanish seems to come through to the surface; the original air is always perceptible. It is like a family likeness coming out in the next generation, yet with the freshness of originality. "But the rhyme is as remarkable as the verse and the translation; not that you have made the *asonante* as perceptible to the English ear as it is to the Spanish—our cumbersome consonants make that impossible. But the wonder is that you have made it perceptible at all."

As possibly the best mode of giving to the reader

an idea of assonant rhyme, we will cite a few lines from Mr. MacCarthy's translation of the Auto Los Encantos de la Culpa, "The Sorceries of Sin."

"All the garden is one joy;
Not a plant that here hath budded,
Not a leaf but breathes from out it,
Fragrance that no tongue can utter.
* * * * *
Limpid fountains leap and bubble,
Breaking with melodious beat;
Songs whose never-ceasing burden
Seemeth sad when most they laugh—
Mirthful most when most they murmur.
And the envious Nymph of Air,
Seeing earth so richly studded
With the flowers of many springs,
Joined in this that is the youngest.
Has unto her azure plain,
Flowers of other kinds conducted;
Which, upborne on myriad wings,
Living nosegays float and flutter." *

M. Julleville's translation into modern French assonants.

Two years ago M. Petit de Julleville published a version of the entire "Chanson de Roland" in modern French verse, with assonant rhymes. It is a very remarkable achievement, and must have cost a world of labour. But French poetry has drifted so far from

* Mr. Longfellow speaks of these translations in even warmer terms than Mr. Ticknor. Every lover of letters must desire that Mr. MacCarthy should bring out a complete and uniform edition, not only of these translations from the Spanish, but of his own exquisite original poetry.

any of its forms in the period when assonants could please the ear, that it may be doubtful whether M. de Julleville's version will ever become popular, except with those who could enjoy the original; and whether the ordinary French reader would not prefer a version altogether unrhymed, like that of M. Gautier, M. Genin, or M. d'Avril. I give one of M. de Julleville's stanzas, that the reader may judge with what skill he has performed so difficult a task.

ORIGINAL.

Sansun li Dux vait ferir l'almacur,
L'escut li freinst k'est ad or e à flurs
Li bons osbercs ne li est guarant prud
Le coer li tranchet le feie e le pulmun
Que mort l'abat cui qu'en peist o cui nun
Dist l'Arcevesque cist colp est de Barun.

M. de Julleville's version is as follows :—

Et Samson 'frappe l'Emir; il brise en deux
Son riche ecu couvert d'or et de fleurs
Le bon haubert le garantit trop peu
Tranche le foie le poumon et le coeur
Et mort l'abat soit tant pis, soit tant mieux
Turpin s'ecrie "ce coup est d'un vrai preux." *

I have to add that there is in the Oxford MS., at the end of each stanza or set of assonants, the curious word or combination of letters, *Aoi*. The refrain

* In Mr. Tickhor's letter to Mr. MacCarthy, which I have cited above, he says, speaking of assonant rhymes, "Would it not be amusing to have the experiment tried in French?" Here is the experiment tried to the full.

A O I, which has to this hour remained a puzzle to the critics; some consider it equivalent to the English "away," others regard it as a musical notation, others as a simple *refrain* or burthen.

The Venetian MS.

In saying that the Bodleian manuscript is the only known copy of the "Roland," I mean the only copy in its original form, the grammatical *langue d'oil* of the eleventh century. There is in truth, in the library of St. Mark, in Venice, a manuscript containing, with some variations, the whole of the "Song of Roland," down to the return of Charlemagne into France. At that point begins a total departure from the Oxford version, and a number of adventures are introduced, which are plainly later additions. The date of this manuscript M. Gautier assigns to the years 1230–40. The language is an Italianized French, such probably as the traveller, to his distraction, may still hear on the borders of Piedmont. The jongleurs, we may conceive, when they plied their vocation in places where the dialect was different from the language of the poem, altered the text *viva voce*, so as to make themselves understood by their hearers; and afterwards it was found convenient to have it written out in its altered form. The Venetian text has been of the utmost service to the editors of the Bodleian MS. It has thrown light on difficult passages, supplied valuable variants and

the means of filling up lacunæ. An excellent edition of the Venetian manuscript was published in 1877, by Herr Eugen Kölbing.* This version is in leashes of assonants like the Bodleian.

But as the French ear grew more cultivated, it became intolerant of the merely assonant rhyme; hence the *rifaccimenti* (*remaniements*), or refashionings, of the poem according to the taste of a later time. The chief feature of these *rifaccimenti* is the change of the assonant into a complete rhyme; still preserving the leash or stanza. This was not to be done without much labour, nor without taking considerable liberties with the original. It was an operation not quite the same as changing blank verse into rhyme, because the assonants were occasionally perfect rhymes, but it was in great degree the same, much as if the Paradise Lost were laboriously turned into rhyme, by inferior artists. Having had to take so great a liberty with the original, all other liberties seemed little, and thus the poem became utterly defaced. M. Gautier mentions six manuscripts of these *rifaccimenti*. One of them, of the fourteenth century, is in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge; another, known as the "Versailles MS.," is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. This

The *rifaccimenti*.

* "La Chanson de Roland. Genauer abdruck der Venetianer Handschrift IV." Besorgt von Eugen Kölbing. Heilbronn, 1877.

latter version M. Francisque Michel has appended, under the name of "Roncesvaux," to the second edition of his "Song of Roland," published in 1869. A comparison of the first stanza of the Bodleian MS., with the same stanza in the "Roncesvaux," will give us a clear idea of the nature of the remaniement.

CHANSON DE ROLAND.

Carles li reis nostre emperere magnes
Set anz tut pleins ad estet en Espaigne
Tresqu' en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne
N'i ad castel ki devant lui remaignet
Murs ne citet n'i est remés à fraindre
Fors Sarraguce kest en une muntaigne
Li reis Marsilies la tient ki Deu n'enaimet
Mahummet sert e Apollin reclaimet
Ne s poet guarden que mals ne li ateignet.

MS. OF VERSAILLES.

Challes li rois à la barbe grifaigne
Sis ans toz plens à este' en Espaigne
Conquist la terre jusqu à la mer alteigne
En meint estor fu ve'ue s'enseigne
Ne trove borc ne castel qu'il n'enplaigne
Ne mur tant aut qu' à la terre n'enfraigne
Forz Saragoze au chief d'une montaigne
La est Marsille qui la loi Deu n'en daigne
Mahommet sert, mot fait folle gaaigne
Ne poit durer que Challes ne le taigne
Car il n'a hom qu'à lui servir se faigne
Fors Guenelon que il tint por engeigne
Jamais n'ert jor que li rois ne s'en plaigne.

It may be seen in some slight degree from the above what liberties the refashioner permitted himself.

Indeed, when once the mania of recasting the earlier poems set in, the new versifier seems to have placed his chief glory in dragging in as many rhymes as possible into one stanza, and never knew how to leave off as long as he was able "to make it clink." It was in imitation of these models that Scott framed the commencement of the "Lay of the Bloody Vest," which Blondel sings to King Richard in "The Talisman."

History of the legend. Germany.

To return to the history of the poem. It must have had an early and wide success. It was translated into Latin and then into German verse by a priest Conrad (Chuonrat), at the request of Duke Henry, whom M. Genin identifies with the Emperor Henry the Lion, and the request was made by desire of Henry's wife, Matilda, daughter of Henry II. of England. The date of this translation M. Genin fixes at from 1173 till 1177. In somewhat more than half a century, the "Ruolandes Liet" itself had to undergo a *rifaccimento*. The German language was then in such a state of flux and transition that even in that short space it had materially changed. The new adapter is known by the name of Stricker; and his poem was published under the title of "Karl." To follow the later German developments of the legend would be to transgress the limits of this Introduction.

The poem spread rapidly through the Scandinavian countries. The "Karlomagnus Saga" is an Icelandic compilation of the thirteenth century, consisting of translations from the French of all the current legends concerning Charlemagne; the eighth of these is "Roncesvalles," and is in substance the "Song of Roland."

Scandinavia.

The "Karlomagnus Saga."

"The Icelandic compiler," says M. Gaston Paris, "follows the Oxford text pretty closely, and seems to know nothing of the later French versions. But there is one most important difference. The saga wholly omits the episode of the Emir Baligant, and even the capture of Saragossa by Karl.

A Danish abridgment of the "Karlomagnus Saga" appeared in the fifteenth century under the name of "Keiser Karl Magnus Kronike," which, in a modern form, is still a popular book in Denmark. Flemish translations or imitations appeared as early as the fifteenth century.

"Keiser Karl Magnus Kronike."

In England, the Carlovingian legend never became popular, notwithstanding the supposed Anglo-Norman origin of the "Song of Roland." Arthur of Britain and Armorica, with his knights of the Table Round, displaced every other band of heroes. In Ellis's "Metrical Romances" will, however, be found an account of three ballads on the Carlovingian theme.

England.

They are Roland and Ferragus, Sir Otuel, and Sir Ferumbras. The first two are in the main taken from the "Pseudo-Turpin." The last seems a paraphrase of Fierabras, one of the later *chansons de geste*. In M. Michel's first edition there are given large extracts from an English MS. poem, apparently of the beginning of the fourteenth century, dealing more immediately with the subject of Roland. As a composition, it is poor in the extreme, so as to be pronounced by M. Michel, "almost worthless."

There is in the British Museum a Life of Charlemagne by Caxton, with the following title: "Th ystorie and Lyf of thè Most Noble and Crysten Prince Charles the Grete, King of France and Emperour of Rome. Printed by William Caxton, December 1, 1485." The early part of this Life seems taken from the Romance of Fierabras. The later portion follows implicitly the "Pseudo-Turpin."

Nor has Ireland been a stranger to the great legend. In the "Book of Lismore," of which the original is at Chatsworth, but of which both Trinity College and the Royal Irish Academy possess copies, there is found at fol. 46 a Narrative of the Conquests of Charles the Great. It has been expounded and partially translated for me by my friend, Professor O'Looney. It also is based on the "Pseudo-Turpin," but it possesses one very original feature—it professes

Ireland.

to give the derivations of the names of the heroes, these derivations being almost wholly Celtic.*

Spain.

The fate of the legend in Spain was singular and yet most natural. National jealousy displaced religious zeal, and the disaster of Roncesvalles began to be claimed as a Spanish victory. The hero who slew Roland in the battle became no other than the famous Bernardo del Carpio.

Mato Bernardo por si
Al Roldan el esforzado
Y a otros muchos Capitanos
De Francia muy estimados.

Readers of "Don Quixote" will remember Sancho singing the ballad of the defeat of the French in Roncesvalles—

Mala la hubistes, Franceses
La Caza de Roncesvalles.

Italy.

Of the Italian poems, I may well be dispensed from speaking. Roland (Orlando) is, as all the world knows, the prime figure in the masterpieces of Italian classical poetry. But in them the legend is in its third stage. The early gestes were sung by minstrels in Italian cities as well as beyond the Alps. We have seen that an Italianized version of the "Song of Roland," not much later in date than

* *e.g.* Rolandus is "the wheel of wisdom" (Roth na hegna); Charles (Serlus) is "the light of the body" (soilloi na Colla).

the Bodleian MS., is preserved in the library of St. Mark. That is only one of many manuscripts which are to be found in the same library, comprising almost all the Carlovingian legends. When, in the course of two centuries, the language of these earlier Italian lays had become obsolete, and the assonants were odious and contemptible, the legend in Italy descended into plain prose, and was expressed by the "Reali di Francia." But it had a glorious resurrection, unparalleled elsewhere. Pulci was the first to appropriate the ancient theme, and with grave mockery, alternating with elevated poetry, to bring vividly before his contemporaries the living figures of Charlemagne and his peers and his Saracen adversaries.

"Pulci was sire of the half-serious rhyme,
Who sang when chivalry was more Quixotic;
And revelled in the fancies of his time,
Brave knights, chaste dames, huge giants, kings despotic."

Alas! the Quixotism of chivalry had passed away long before Pulci, but no doubt the themes were "the fancies of his time." For one thing, Pulci, as the sequel to all his humorous extravagances, gives a most spirited and stirring narrative of the disaster of Roncesvalles, in which neither the blow given by the dying Oliver to Roland in his blindness, nor Roland's endeavour to break his sword against the rock, is omitted. It is curious that Pulci (in this differing from all the

Roland represented by Pulci as an old man.

other romancers) describes Roland not as young but old, "Antico e saggio." He makes him say of himself while dying—

> "Io dico pace dopo lunga guerra,
> Ch'io son per gli anni pur defesso e stanco,
> Rendi il misero corpo a questa terra
> Il qual tu vedi *già canuto e bianco.*"
>
> Cant. 27, st. 122.

And again the poet apostrophizes him as "O Santo Vecchio!" (cant. 27, st. 153). This is an exaggeration of the "Pseudo-Turpin" itself, and is scarcely consistent with Roland's legendary character. It is entirely different from what we find both earlier and later. Pulci is the only poet among the Italian Cinquecentisti who even attempts to portray the disaster of Roncesvalles. Ariosto pursues a far different flight—

> "Le Donne, I Cavalier, gli armi, gl' Amori."

His poem is a wondrous kaleidoscope, a perpetually shifting scene of love and enchantment, winged horses, warrior-maidens, fountains of desire and hatred, and a thousand other delightful fooleries, —if one may so translate the epithet applied to them by the Cardinal D'Este. Mr. Gladstone, in his lately republished essay on Leopardi, complains of the present neglect of the Italian poets. It is true, and, as regards Ariosto, not easily explicable. But what a distance separates the deep and simple earnest-

ness of the Roland from the light, playful touch of the Orlando Furioso! In another point, too, there is, unhappily for Ariosto, a difference as great. From the beginning to the end of the older poem, the page is not sullied by one evil thought or expression. All is pure, dignified, and chivalrous. The very love between Roland and the fair Alda is only shown by her dying for him.

The Basque ballads on Roncesvalles.

But the real victors, the Basques, had their own ballads in their own tongue. And these ballads were conceived, as was natural, in a strain of exultation and scorn. M. Michel, in the appendix to his first edition, gives extracts from the Basque song of Altabizar, with a translation into modern French. Thus the extracts run—

"What came they to do in our mountains, those men of the north? Why came they hither to disturb our peace? God made the mountains for men to transgress them not. But the rocks hurled down fall on the soldiers and crush them. Their blood flows, their flesh quivers, their bones are shattered. What a sea of blood!

"Fly, fly, ye who have strength and a steed! Fly, King Charlemagne, with thy dark plumes and thy crimson vesture! Thy nephew, thy bravest Roland, lies dead below. His courage availed him not. And now, Escualdunacs, let us quit the rocks and march down, flinging our shafts upon those who fly."

To return to the "Chanson de Roland." The French boldly challenge for this poem the name and dignity of an epic. "No longer," they say, "can the reproach be cast upon France, of being destitute of the epic genius, nor the Henriade be flung scornfully in our faces." Certainly many of the recognized attributes of the epic cannot be denied to the Roland: it wants neither majesty of theme, nor heroic grandeur in the personages, nor a great catastrophe, nor unity of conception and action, nor what is termed poetic justice. The reader's sympathy is uniformly enlisted in behalf of what is highest in human nature—valour, faith, tenderness, devotion to creed and country. And yet, in a poem aspiring to be classed with the half-dozen masterpieces of man, we desire, over and above all these qualities, a certain loftiness and grandeur of expression—the "Os magna sonaturum," the large utterance of the elder gods, which the warmest admirers of our poem would hardly assert for it. It is throughout as simple in diction as a ballad. There is not a simile, not a metaphor throughout. Such current phrases as "like angry lions," cannot be regarded as exceptions. This simplicity, however, brings with it one great merit—a complete freedom from pretence, and therefore from bad taste. The author never once obtrudes

The rank of an epic claimed by the French for this poem.

Its simplicity of diction.

himself. Happily, he lived two centuries before the time when grand moral sentiments and personifications of the virtues and vices came in fashion. If he ever is tedious, it is with what may be termed a Homeric tediousness; I mean in the account of the several single combats between Franks and Saracens in the battle. The details of the killing certainly affect us with a certain sense of monotony. But we must remember the audiences to which the poem was addressed. Over and above the delight in all warlike deeds, they had a keen and vivid sympathy with the Christian cause, which made them exult or lament over every incident of the combat as if it were passing before their eyes. It must be also owned that the manifestations of grief are too vehement, and, towards the end of the poem, recur too often; and the reader can scarce help inwardly protesting against so much weeping and tearing of hair and beard, above all, against the wholesale swooning of men by the hundred thousand. But to alter any of these things is not permitted to a translator.

That the author had never read a line of Homer or Virgil may be well taken for granted. There is, indeed, a reference to them in one line of the episode of the Emir of Babylon, but it only serves to show that their names were to him names merely. Speaking of the antiquity of the emir, he says that he had

outlived Virgil and Homer. "Tut survesquiet e Virgilie e Omer." Whatever idea may be meant to be conveyed by this expression, it is plain that it never would have been used by one who had the least acquaintance with their works. The Homeric resemblances which have been traced in the poem are the natural coincidences between the products of ages which, though far distant, had much in common, and the efforts of kindred though unequal genius.

Its imaginable effect on the Middle Ages.

Such as it is, the numerous popular editions, and the continuous rendering of it into modern French, are a manifest proof that it has given delight to thousands of readers in our time. What must it have been in its own? Let us conceive the market-place of some French or Italian mediæval city, such as a whole world of art has made us familiar with. It is an hour or so after noon, when the morning's business and the midday meal are both well over, and the after-dinner time is weighing somewhat heavily upon the citizens. The rumour goes that the famous jongleur, or trouvère, who had been entertained the preceding night at the castle of the lord upon the hill, is riding thither, and means to give them a cast of his art. Soon the market-place is thronged, and, after a long period of expectation, their desire is gratified. The jongleur has come, and he and his attendant, having put up their horses at the hostelry,

are making their way through the crowd, which eagerly separates to admit them. He wears a long mantle, cap, and feather, and his attendant carries a little triangular lyre. He mounts upon the *perron* of the Hotel de Ville, or upon some temporary scaffold, takes the lyre from his companion, and, striking a few preluding notes to mark the rhythm, commences the tale of the disaster of Roncesvalles. His voice, naturally strong and melodious (or he would not have chosen such a calling), has been cultivated with the greatest care, and he has formed himself to all the arts of an accomplished actor. The language he uses has nothing strange or antiquated; it is the very idiom of the assembly he is addressing. It is, of course, impossible that the whole poem should be recited in one day. He selects such parts as he deems will most captivate his audience, or, if he means to make a stay for some days, he gives it to them piecemeal, breaking off each day like a *feuilletoniste*, at some point of highly wrought interest. But if we, after the lapse of centuries, in a cultivated age, reading this as a mere fiction, in a language now grown wholly obsolete, cannot help being moved by its heroic and pathetic traits, what, I repeat, must it have been when declaimed in their own tongue, and by a finished orator, to a population who listened to every word with unquestioning faith, and whose hearts were on fire for

the Christian cause? Poggio relates in his "*Facetiæ*," as a ridiculous story, that a citizen of Milan came home sobbing to his wife, and when she asked the cause, he answered that he was weeping for a tale he had heard a minstrel tell of the deaths of Roland and Olivier and of the peers of Charlemagne. Tears for such a cause seemed highly facetious to the man of the Renaissance.

But the jongleur had other audiences dearer to his heart. From the city market-place we may follow him to the halls of princes and nobles. Imagine the long and weary evenings in a mediæval castle; then conceive what a delight and resource it must have been when fortune brought a minstrel who was master of the *chansons de geste*, and, above all, of the great "Song of Roncesvalles." High and low, baron, squire, and servitor, lady and damsel, would gather round, and hang upon the strain. And not for pleasure alone. Familiarity with such a poem must have formed no mean education in point of nobility of thought and greatness of purpose. It was romance, no doubt, but not the chimerical romance of knight-errantry. It was the story of brave men fighting to the last, against desperate odds, for their land and faith.

I so much admire this poem that I wonder more and more at my own temerity in having ventured

to translate it. I learned first of its existence from an admirable article in the *Quarterly Review*, published in the year 1866; and this, and some most scholarly and appreciative essays in the *Saturday Review*, were all that I had seen concerning it in English. Two or three years ago the poem itself came into my hands almost accidentally, and I soon found myself attempting to translate parts of it. But most certainly it never would have been completed or published if it had not been for the encouragement given to me by the lost friend to whom it is dedicated, and who went over it with me during a long vacation which I had the happiness of spending in his society. There has been no previous translation into English that I am aware of, except a graceful prose version given by Mrs. Marsh, of a condensation of the poem, contained in an article by M. Vitet, in the "Revue des Deux Mondes." *

The present translation.

The edition I have taken as the basis of my translation has been that of M. Léon Gautier, whose name I have had occasion to mention more than once in this Introduction.† In truth, no one has made the

* "The Song of Roland, as chanted before the Battle of Hastings by the Minstrel Taillefer." Translated by the author of "Emilia Wyndham." London: Hurst and Blackett; 1854.

† "La Chanson de Roland, Texte Critique, Traduction, et Commentaire, Grammaire et Glossaire," par Léon Gautier. Ouvrage Couronné par l'Academie Française et par l'Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. Tours, Mame et fils, 1876.

"Song of Roland" so completely his own. The most learned of the German editors, Th. Müller, speaks of his labours in terms of high praise, and adopts many of his readings. His work, as may be seen, has received a double crown. He has not only restored most happily parts which time or the carelessness of the scribe had defaced, but he has supplied, from the Venetian version or from the later *rifaccimenti*, stanzas necessary to the completeness of the story. I have taken almost all of these "lacunes comblées" into my translation. I have omitted some, but they were evidently doubtful to M. Gautier himself, as is manifest by his adding a query (?) to them.

A word or two as to the metre I have chosen. If I had had the least confidence that I could have approached the success of Mr. MacCarthy, in domesticating the assonant rhyme in our language, I might have been tempted to try it. The first stanza would then have run somewhat thus—

> It was when Karl the King, our Emperor great,
> Had battled now for seven full years in Spain,
> And won the highland to the ocean wave;
> Nor fortress standing in the realm remained,
> Nor wall nor town was left for him to take,
> Save Saragossa, on a mountain placed;—
> King Marsil holds it, who hath God in hate;
> Mahound he serves, and to Apollin prays,
> Yet could not ward the doom that him assailed.

But I feel that both my own powers and the public taste would have failed me. I adopted the mixed iambic and anapæstic metre, which "Christabel" and the "Siege of Corinth" and the "Bridal of Triermain" have made so familiar to us. It has, I know, fallen into much discredit as a lilting metre. Mr. Conington speaks very disparagingly of it, in the introduction to his translation of Virgil. And yet I doubt if I could have chosen better. One can certainly imagine the story of Roland beautifully rendered in heroic numbers. Not, perhaps, in the couplet of Pope, but in the free, sweet, and dignified line of Chaucer and Keats, of which in our day Mr. Morris has shown himself so complete a master. Still more perfectly could it be conceived as another idyll, in the exquisite blank verse of the laureate. But I dared not attempt either, and I perceived that one advantage lay in a metre so facile, viz., that many of the proper names, especially among the heathen, were "strong and unworkable," not easily got into verse, unless the verse were of a somewhat elastic character.

For the rest, no one knows more than I for how many shortcomings I have to plead. What is so emphatically stated by Pope and Byron, of the absolute devotion and concentration of faculties necessary for poetry, is true in its degree even of a translation. And I feel that much cannot be hoped from the out-

come of the leisure hours and scattered intervals of a working lawyer. For one thing, I may say that I have striven throughout to be as literal as difference of idiom and "the wicked necessity of rhyming" would permit.

In any case, it is at least something to aid in making known to the English reading public a poem of such genuine beauty and poetic power—a poem which the world of letters in France and Germany are almost agreed in admitting to a high place among the masterpieces of human genius.*

* These sheets were almost in the printer's hands before I had the good fortune to meet with Mr. Ormsby's spirited and flowing version of the best parts of the "Epic of the Cid," which creates a strong wish to see a rendering of the entire poem by him in verse. The points of resemblance and difference between it and the "Roland" are very curious.

PART I.

THE TREASON OF GANELON.

[As already mentioned, I have in this translation adopted, from M. Léon Gautier's edition, some stanzas and parts of stanzas not found in the Oxford MS., but inserted by him, either from the Venetian version or the later French remaniements.

These additions he prints in italics, so as to separate distinctly the Bodleian text from what is not found in it. I have not followed his example in this respect, but I wish to designate here the passages which are not in the Oxford MS.

They are, in this first part of the poem, stanzas 24, 65 and 68, and some lines of stanzas 9, 16, 34 and 58.]

Saragossa. The Council of King Marsil.

I.

THE king, our Emperor Carlemaine,*
Hath been for seven full years in Spain.†
From highland to sea hath he won the land;
City was none might his arm withstand;
Keep and castle alike went down—
Save Saragossa, the mountain town.
The King Marsilius holds the place,
Who loveth not God, nor seeks His grace:
He prays to Apollin,‡ and serves Mahound;
But he saved him not from the fate he found.

II.

In Saragossa King Marsil made
His council-seat in the orchard shade,
On a stair of marble of azure hue.§
There his courtiers round him drew;

* See Note A.
† See Note B.
‡ See Note C.
§ See Note D.

While there stood, the king before,
Twenty thousand men and more.
Thus to his dukes and his counts he said,*
"Hear ye, my lords, we are sore bested.
The Emperor Karl of gentle France †
Hither hath come for our dire mischance.
Nor host to meet him in battle line,
Nor power to shatter his power, is mine.
Speak, my sages; your counsel lend:
My doom of shame and death forefend."
But of all the heathens none spake word
Save Blancandrin, Val Fonde's lord.

III.

Blancandrin was a heathen wise,
Knightly and valiant of enterprise,
Sage in council his lord to aid;
And he said to the king, "Be not dismayed:
Proffer to Karl, the haughty and high,
Lowly friendship and fealty;
Ample largess lay at his feet,
Bear and lion and greyhound fleet.
Seven hundred camels his tribute be,
A thousand hawks that have moulted free.
Let full four hundred mules be told,
Laden with silver enow and gold

* See Note E. † See Note F.

For fifty waggons to bear away;
So shall his soldiers receive their pay.
Say, too long hath he warred in Spain,—
Let him turn to France—to his Aix—again.
At Saint Michael's feast you will thither speed,
Bend your heart to the Christian creed,
And his liegeman be in duty and deed.
Hostages he may demand
Ten or twenty at your hand.
We will send him the sons whom our wives have nursed;
Were death to follow, mine own the first.
Better by far that they there should die
Than be driven all from our land to fly,
Flung to dishonour and beggary.

IV.

"Yea," said Blancandrin, "by this right hand,
And my floating beard by the free wind fanned,
Ye shall see the host of the Franks disband,
And hie them back into France their land;
Each to his home as beseemeth well,
And Karl unto Aix—to his own Chapelle.
He will hold high feast on Saint Michael's day
And the time of your tryst shall pass away.
Tale nor tidings of us shall be;
Fiery and sudden, I know, is he:

He will smite off the heads of our hostages all:
Better, I say, that their heads should fall
Than we the fair land of Spain forego,
And our lives be laden with shame and woe."
"Yea," said the heathens, "it may be so."

V.

King Marsil's council is over that day,
And he called to him Clarin of Balaguet,
Estramarin, and Eudropin his peer,
Bade Garlon and Priamon both draw near,
Machiner and his uncle Maheu—with these
Joïmer and Malbien from overseas,
Blancandrin for spokesman,—of all his men
He hath summoned there the most felon ten.
"Go ye to Carlemaine," spake their liege,—
"At Cordres city he sits in siege,*—
While olive branches in hand ye press,
Token of peace and of lowliness.
Win him to make fair treaty with me,
Silver and gold shall your guerdon be,
Land and lordship in ample fee."
"Nay," said the heathens, "enough have we."

VI.

So did King Marsil his council end.
"Lords," he said, "on mine errand wend;

* See Note G.

While olive branches in hand ye bring,
Say from me unto Karl the king,
For sake of his God let him pity show;
And ere ever a month shall come and go,
With a thousand faithful of my race,
I will follow swiftly upon his trace,
Freely receive his Christian law,
And his liegeman be in love and awe.
Hostages asks he? it shall be done."
Blancandrin answered, "Your peace is won."

VII.

Then King Marsil bade be dight
Ten fair mules of snowy white,
Erst from the King of Sicily * brought,
Their trappings with silver and gold inwrought—
Gold the bridle, and silver the selle.
On these are the messengers mounted well;
And they ride with olive boughs in hand,
To seek the lord of the Frankish land.
Well let him watch; he shall be trepanned.

* See Note H.

At Cordres. Carlemaine's Council.

VIII.

King Karl is jocund and gay of mood,
He hath Cordres city at last subdued;
Its shattered walls and turrets fell
By catapult and mangonel;
Not a heathen did there remain
But confessed him Christian or else was slain.*
The Emperor sits in an orchard wide,
Roland and Olivier by his side:
Samson the duke, and Anseis proud;
Geoffrey of Anjou, whose arm was vowed
The royal gonfalon to rear;
Gerein, and his fellow in arms, Gerier;
With them many a gallant lance,
Full fifteen thousand of gentle France.
The cavaliers sit upon carpets white,
Playing at tables for their delight;
The older and sager sit at the chess,
The bachelors fence with a light address.
Seated underneath a pine,
Close beside an eglantine,
Upon a throne of beaten gold,
The lord of ample France behold;
White his hair and beard were seen,

* See Note I.

Fair of body, and proud of mien,
Who sought him needed not ask, I ween.
The ten alight before his feet,
And him in all observance greet.

IX.

Blancandrin first his errand gave,
And he said to the king, "May God you save,
The God of glory, to whom you bend!
Marsil, our king, doth his greeting send.
Much hath he mused on the law of grace,
Much of his wealth at your feet will place—
Bears and lions, and dogs of chase,
Seven hundred camels that bend the knee,
A thousand hawks that have moulted free,
Four hundred mules, with silver and gold
Which fifty wains might scantly hold,
So shall you have of the red bezants
To pay the soldiers of gentle France.
Overlong have you dwelt in Spain,—
To Aix, your city, return again.
The lord I serve will thither come,
Accept the law of Christendom,
With claspèd hands your liegeman be,
And hold his realm of you in fee."
The Emperor raised his hands on high,
Bent and bethought him silently.

X.

The Emperor bent his head full low;
Never hasty of speech, I trow,
Leisurely came his words, and slow.
Lofty his look as he raised his head:
"Thou hast spoken well," at length he said.
"King Marsil was ever my deadly foe,
And of all these words, so fair in show,
How may I the fulfilment know?"
"Hostages will you?" the heathen cried,
"Ten or twenty, or more beside.
I will send my son, were his death at hand,
With the best and noblest of all our land;
And when you sit in your palace halls,
And the feast of Saint Michael of Peril falls,
Unto the waters will come our king,
Which God commanded for you to spring;
There in the laver of Christ be laved."
"Yea!" said Karl, "he may yet be saved."

XI.

Fair and bright did the evening fall:
The ten white mules were stabled in stall;
On the sward was a fair pavilion dressed,
To give to the Saracens cheer of the best;
Servitors twelve at their bidding bide,
And they rest all night until morning tide.

The Emperor rose with the day-dawn clear,
Failed not Matins and Mass to hear,
Then betook him beneath a pine,
Summoned his barons by word and sign:
As his Franks advise will his choice incline.

XII.

Under a pine is the Emperor gone,
And his barons to council come forth anon: *
Archbishop Turpin, Duke Ogier bold,
With his nephew Henry was Richard the old,
Gascony's gallant Count Acelin,
Tybalt of Rheims, and Milo his kin,
Gerein and his brother in arms, Gerier,
Count Roland and his faithful fere,
The gentle and valiant Olivier:
More than a thousand Franks of France.
And Ganelon came, of woful chance;
By him was the deed of treason done.
So was the fatal consult begun.

XIII.

"Lords my barons," the Emperor said,
"King Marsil to me hath his envoys sped.
He proffers treasure surpassing bounds,
Bears and lions, and leashèd hounds;

* See Note J.

Seven hundred camels that bend the knee;
A thousand hawks that have moulted free;
Four hundred mules with Arab gold,
Which fifty wains might scantly hold.
But he saith to France must I wend my way:
He will follow to Aix with brief delay,
Bend his heart unto Christ's belief,
And hold his marches of me in fief;
Yet I know not what in his heart may lie."
"Beware! beware!" was the Franks' outcry.

XIV.

Scarce his speech did the Emperor close,
When in high displeasure Count Roland rose,*
Fronted his uncle upon the spot,
And said, "This Marsil, believe him not:
Seven full years have we warred in Spain;
Commibles and Noples for you have I ta'en,
Tudela and Sebilie, cities twain;
Valtierra I won, and the land of Pine,†
And Balaguet fell to this arm of mine.
King Marsil hath ever a traitor been:
He sent of his heathens, at first fifteen,
Bearing each one an olive bough,
Speaking the self-same words as now.
Into council with your Franks you went,
Lightly they flattered your heart's intent;

* See Note K. † See Note L.

Two of your barons to him you sent,—
They were Basan and Basil, the brother knights :
He smote off their heads on Haltoia's heights.
War, I say !—end as you well began,
Unto Saragossa lead on your van ;
Were the siege to last your lifetime through,
Avenge the nobles this felon slew."

XV.

The Emperor bent him and mused within,
Twisted his beard upon lip and chin,
Answered his nephew nor good nor ill ;
And the Franks, save Ganelon, all were still :
Hastily to his feet he sprang,
Haughtily his words outrang :—
" By me or by others be not misled,—
Look to your own good ends," he said.
" Since now King Marsil his faith assures,
That, with hands together clasped in yours,*
He will henceforth your vassal be,
Receive the Christian law as we,
And hold his realm of you in fee,
Whoso would treaty like this deny,
Recks not, sire, by what death we die :
Good never came from counsel of pride,—
List to the wise, and let madmen bide."

* See Note M.

XVI.

Then his form Duke Naimes upreared,
White of hair and hoary of beard.*
Better vassal in court was none.
"You have hearkened," he said, "unto Ganelon.
Well hath Count Ganelon made reply;
Wise are his words, if you bide thereby.
King Marsil is beaten and broken in war;
You have captured his castles anear and far,
With your engines shattered his walls amain,
His cities burned, his soldiers slain:
Respite and ruth if he now implore,
Sin it were to molest him more.
Let his hostages vouch for the faith he plights,
And send him one of your Christian knights.
'Twere time this war to an ending came."
"Well saith the duke!" the Franks exclaim.

XVII.

"Lords my barons, who then were best
In Saragossa to do our hest?"
"I," said Naimes, "of your royal grace,
Yield me in token your glove and mace."
"Nay—my sagest of men art thou:
By my beard upon lip and chin I vow
Thou shalt never depart so far from me:
Sit thee down till I summon thee.

* See Note N.

XVIII.

"Lords my barons, whom send we, then,
To Saragossa, the Saracen den?"
"I," said Roland, "will blithely go."
"Nay," said Olivier; "nay, not so.
All too fiery of mood thou art:
Thou wouldst play, I fear me, a perilous part.
I go myself, if the king but will."
"I command," said Karl, "that ye both be still.
Neither shall be on this errand bound,
Nor one of the twelve—my peers around;
So by my blanching beard I swear."
The Franks are abashed and silent there.

XIX.

Turpin of Rheims rose from the ranks:
"Look, my liege, on your faithful Franks:
Seven full years have they held this land,
With pain and peril on every hand.
To me be the mace and the glove consigned;
I will go this Saracen lord to find,
And freely forth will I speak my mind."
The Emperor answered, in angry plight,
"Sit thee down on that carpet white;
Speak not till I thy speech invite.

XX.

"My cavaliers," he began anew,
"Choose of my marches a baron true,
Before King Marsil my hest to do."
"Be it, then," said Roland, "my stepsire Gan,
In vain ye seek for a meeter man."
The Franks exclaim, "He is worth the trust,
So it please the king it is right and just."
Count Ganelon then was with anguish wrung,
His mantle of fur from his neck he flung,
Stood all stark in his silken vest,
And his grey eyes gleamed with a fierce unrest.
Fair of body and large of limb,
All in wonderment gazed on him.
"Thou madman," thus he to Roland cried,
"What may this rage against me betide?
I am thy stepsire, as all men know,
And thou doom'st me on hest like this to go;
But so God my safe return bestow,
I promise to work thee scathe and strife
Long as thou breathest the breath of life."
"Pride and folly!" said Roland, then.
"Am I known to reck of the threats of men?
But this is work for the sagest head.
So it please the king, I will go instead."

XXI.

"In *my* stead?—never, of mine accord.
Thou art not my vassal nor I thy lord.
Since Karl commands me his hest to fill,
Unto Saragossa ride forth I will;
Yet I fear me to wreak some deed of ill,
Thereby to slake this passion's might."
Roland listened, and laughed outright.

XXII.

At Roland's laughter Count Ganelon's pain
Was as though his bosom were cleft in twain.
He turned to his stepson as one distraught:
"I do not love thee," he said, "in aught;
Thou hast false judgment against me wrought.
O righteous Emperor, here I stand
To execute your high command.

XXIII.

"Unto Saragossa I needs must go;—
Who goeth may never return, I know;—
Yet withal, your sister is spouse of mine,
And our son—no fairer of mortal line—
Baldwin bids to be goodly knight:*
I leave him my honours and fiefs of right.
Guard him—no more shall he greet my sight."

* See Note O.

Saith Karl, "Thou art over tender of heart.
Since I command it, thou shalt depart.

XXIV.

"Fair Sir Gan," the Emperor spake,
"This my message to Marsil take:
He shall make confession of Christ's belief,
And I yield him full half of Spain in fief;
In the other half shall Count Roland reign.
If he choose not the terms I now ordain,
I will march unto Saragossa's gate,
Besiege and capture the city straight,
Take and bind him both hands and feet,
Lead him to Aix, to my royal seat,
There to be tried and judged and slain,
Dying a death of disgrace and pain.
I have sealed the scroll of my command.
Deliver it into the heathen's hand.

XXV.

"Gan," said the Emperor, "draw thou near:
Take my glove and my bâton here;
On thee did the choice of thy fellows fall."
"Sire, 'twas Roland who wrought it all.
I shall not love him while life may last,
Nor Olivier his comrade fast,

Nor the peers who cherish and prize him so,—
Gage of defiance to all I throw."
Saith Karl, "Thine anger hath too much sway.
Since I ordain it, thou must obey."
"I go, but warranty none have I
That I may not like Basil and Basan die."

XXVI.

The Emperor reached him his right-hand glove;
Gan for his office had scanty love;
As he bent him forward, it fell to ground:
"God, what is this!" said the Franks around;
"Evil will come of this quest we fear."
"My lords," said Ganelon, "ye shall hear.

XXVII.

"Sire," he said, "let me wend my way;
Since go I must, what boots delay?"
Said the king, "In Jesus' name and mine!"
And his right hand sained him with holy sign.
Then he to Ganelon's grasp did yield
His royal mace and missive sealed.

XXVIII.

Home to his hostel is Ganelon gone,
His choicest of harness and arms to don;

On his charger Taschebrun to mount and ride,
With his good sword Murgleis girt at side.
On his feet are fastened the spurs of gold,
And his uncle Guinemer doth his stirrup hold.
Then might ye look upon cavaliers
A-many round him who spake in tears.
"Sir," they said, "what a woful day!
Long were you ranked in the king's array,
A noble vassal as none gainsay.
For him who doomed you to journey hence
Carlemaine's self shall be scant defence;
Foul was the thought in Count Roland's mind,
When you and he are so high affined.
Sir," they said, "let us with you wend."
"Nay," said Ganelon, "God forefend.
Liefer alone to my death I go,
Than such brave bachelors perish so.
Sirs, ye return into France the fair;
Greeting from me to my lady bear,
To my friend and peer Sir Pinabel,
And to Baldwin, my son, whom ye all know well,—
Cherish him, own him your lord of right."
He hath passed on his journey and left their sight.

The Embassy and Crime of Ganelon.

XXIX.

Ganelon rides under olives high,
And comes the Saracen envoys nigh.
Blancandrin lingers until they meet,
And in cunning converse each other greet.
The Saracen thus began their parle:
"What a man, what a wondrous man is Karl!
Apulia—Calabria—all subdued,
Unto England crossed he, the salt sea rude,*
Won for Saint Peter his tribute fee;
But what in our marches maketh he?"
Ganelon said, "He is great of heart,
Never man shall fill so mighty a part."

XXX.

Said Blancandrin, "Your Franks are high of fame,
But your dukes and counts are sore to blame.
Such counsel to their lord they give,
Nor he nor others in peace may live."
Ganelon answered, "I know of none,
Save Roland, who thus to his shame hath done.
Last morn the Emperor sat in the shade,
His nephew came in his mail arrayed,—

* See Note P.

He had plundered Carcassonne just before,
And a vermeil apple in hand he bore:
'Sire,' he said, 'to your feet I bring
The crown of every earthly king.'
Disaster is sure such pride to blast;
He setteth his life on a daily cast.
Were he slain, we all should have peace at last."

XXXI.

"Ruthless is Roland," Blancandrin spake,
"Who every race would recreant make,
And on all possessions of men would seize;
But in whom doth he trust for feats like these?"
"The Franks! the Franks!" Count Ganelon cried;
"They love him, and never desert his side;
For he lavisheth gifts that seldom fail,
Gold and silver in countless tale,
Mules and chargers, and silks and mail.
The king himself may have spoil at call.
From hence to the East he will conquer all."

XXXII.

Thus Blancandrin and Ganelon rode,
Till each on other his faith bestowed
That Roland should be by practice slain,
And so they journeyed by path and plain,
Till in Saragossa they bridle drew,
There alighted beneath a yew.

In a pine-tree's shadow a throne was set;
Alexandrian silk was the coverlet:
There the Monarch of Spain they found,
With twenty thousand Saracens round,
Yet from them came nor breath nor sound;
All for the tidings they strained to hear,
As they saw Blancandrin and Ganelon near.

XXXIII.

Blancandrin stepped before Marsil's throne,
Ganelon's hand was in his own.
"Mahound you save," to the king he said,
"And Apollin, whose holy law we dread!
Fairly your errand to Karl was done;
But other answer made he none,
Save that his hands to Heaven he raised,
Save that a space his God he praised;
He sends a baron of his court,
Knight of France, and of high report,
Of him your tidings of peace receive."
"Let him speak," said Marsil, "we yield him leave."

XXXIV.

Gan had bethought him, and mused with art;
Well was he skilled to play his part;
And he said to Marsil, "May God you save,
The God of glory, whose grace we crave!

Thus saith the noble Carlemaine:
You shall make in Christ confession plain,
And he gives you in fief full half of Spain;
The other half shall be Roland's share
(Right haughty partner, he yields you there);
And should you slight the terms I bear,
He will come and gird Saragossa round,
You shall be taken by force and bound,
Led unto Aix, to his royal seat,
There to perish by judgment meet,
Dying a villainous death of shame."
Over King Marsil a horror came;
He grasped his javelin, plumed with gold,*
In act to smite, were he not controlled.

XXXV.

King Marsil's cheek the hue hath left,
And his right hand grasped his weapon's heft.
When Ganelon saw it, his sword he drew
Finger lengths from the scabbard two.
"Sword," he said, "thou art clear and bright;
I have borne thee long in my fellows' sight;
Mine Emperor never shall say of me
That I perished afar, in a strange countrie,
Ere thou in the blood of their best wert dyed."
"Dispart the mellay," the heathens cried.

* See Note Q.

XXXVI.

The noblest Saracens thronged amain,
Seated the king on his throne again,
And the Algalif said, "'Twas a sorry prank,
Raising your weapon to slay the Frank.
It was yours to hearken in silence there."
"Sir," said Gan, "I may meetly bear,
But for all the wealth of your land arrayed,
For all the gold that God hath made,
Would I not live and leave unsaid,
What Karl, the mightiest king below,
Sends, through me, to his mortal foe."
His mantle of fur, that was round him twined,
With silk of Alexandria lined,
Down at Blancandrin's feet he cast,
But still he held by his good sword fast,
Grasping the hilt by its golden ball.
"A noble knight," say the heathens all.

XXXVII.

Ganelon came to the king once more.
"Your anger," he said "misserves you sore
As the princely Carlemaine saith, I say,
You shall the Christian law obey.

* See Note R.

And half of Spain you shall hold in fee,
The other half shall Count Roland's be,
(And a haughty partner 'tis yours to see).
Reject the treaty I here propose,
Round Saragossa his lines will close;
You shall be bound in fetters strong,
Led to his city of Aix along.
Nor steed nor palfrey shall you bestride,
Nor mule nor jennet be yours to ride;
On a sorry sumpter you shall be cast,
And your head by doom stricken off at last.
So is the Emperor's mandate traced,"—
And the scroll in the heathen's hand he placed.

XXXVIII.

Discoloured with ire was King Marsil's hue;
The seal he brake and to earth he threw,
Read of the scroll the tenor clear.
"So Karl the Emperor writes me here,
Bids me remember his wrath and pain
For sake of Basan and Basil slain,
Whose necks I smote on Haltoia's hill;
Yet, if my life I would ransom still,
Mine uncle the Algalif must I send,
Or love between us were else at end."
Then outspake Jurfalez, Marsil's son:
"This is but madness of Ganelon.

For crime so deadly his life shall pay;
Justice be mine on his head this day."
Ganelon heard him, and waved his blade,
While his back against a pine he stayed.

XXXIX.

Into his orchard King Marsil stepped.
His nobles round him their station kept:
There was Jurfalez, his son and heir,
Blancandrin of the hoary hair,
The Algalif, truest of all his kin.
Said Blancandrin, "Summon the Christian in;
His troth he pledged me upon our side."
"Go," said Marsil, "be thou his guide."
Blancandrin led him, hand-in-hand,
Before King Marsil's face to stand.
Then was the villainous treason planned.

XL.

"Fair Sir Ganelon," spake the king,
"I did a rash and despighteous thing,
Raising against thee mine arm to smite.
Richly will I the wrong requite.
See these sables whose worth were told
At full five hundred pounds of gold:
Thine shall they be ere the coming day."
"I may not," said Gan, "your grace gainsay.
God in His pleasure will you repay."

XLI.

"Trust me I love thee, Sir Gan, and fain
Would I hear thee discourse of Carlemaine.
He is old, methinks, exceeding old;
And full two hundred years hath told;
With toil his body spent and worn,
So many blows on his buckler borne,
So many a haughty king laid low,
When will he weary of warring so?"
"Such is not Carlemaine," Gan replied;
"Man never knew him, nor stood beside,
But will say how noble a lord is he,
Princely and valiant in high degree.
Never could words of mine express
His honour, his bounty, his gentleness.
'Twas God who graced him with gifts so high.
Ere I leave his vassalage I will die."

XLII.*

The heathen said, "I marvel sore
Of Carlemaine, so old and hoar,
Who counts I ween two hundred years,
Hath borne such strokes of blades and spears,
So many lands hath overrun,
So many mighty kings undone,
When will he tire of war and strife?"
"Not while his nephew breathes in life.

* See Note S.

Beneath the cope of heaven this day
Such vassal leads not king's array.
Gallant and sage is Olivier,
And all the twelve, to Karl so dear,
With twenty thousand Franks in van,
He feareth not the face of man."

XLIII.

"Strange," said Marsil, "seems to me,
Karl, so white with eld is he,
Twice a hundred years, men say,
Since his birth have passed away.
All his wars in many lands,
All the strokes of trenchant brands,
All the kings despoiled and slain,—
When will he from war refrain?"
"Not till Roland breathes no more,
For from hence to eastern shore,
Where is chief with him may vie?
Olivier his comrade by,
And the peers, of Karl the pride,
Twenty thousand Franks beside,
Vanguard of his host, and flower,
Karl may mock at mortal power.

XLIV.

"I tell thee, Sir Gan, that a power is mine;
Fairer did never in armour shine,

Four hundred thousand cavaliers,
With the Franks of Karl to measure spears."
"Fling such folly," said Gan, "away;
Sorely your heathens would rue the day.
Proffer the Emperor ample prize,
A sight to dazzle the Frankish eyes;
Send him hostages full a score,
So returns he to France once more.
But his rear will tarry behind the host;
There, I trow, will be Roland's post—
There will Sir Olivier remain.
Hearken to me, and the counts lie slain;
The pride of Karl shall be crushed that day,
And his wars be ended with you for aye."

XLV.

"Speak, then, and tell me, Sir Ganelon,
How may Roland to death be done?"
"Through Cizra's pass will the Emperor wind,*
But his rear will linger in march behind;
Roland and Olivier there shall be,
With twenty thousand in company.
Muster your battle against them then,
A hundred thousand heathen men.
Till worn and spent be the Frankish bands,
Though your bravest perish beneath their hands.

* See Note T.

For another battle your powers be massed,
Roland will sink, overcome at last.
There were a feat of arms indeed,
And your life from peril thenceforth be freed.

XLVI.

"For whoso Roland to death shall bring,
From Karl his good right arm will wring,
The marvellous host will melt away,
No more shall he muster a like array,
And the mighty land will in peace repose."
King Marsil heard him to the close;
Then kissed him on the neck, and bade
His royal treasures be displayed.

XLVII.

What said they more? Why tell the rest?
Said Marsil, "Fastest bound is best;
Come, swear me here to Roland's fall."
"Your will," said Gan, "be mine in all,"
He swore on the relics in the hilt
Of his sword Murgleis, and crowned his guilt.

XLVIII.

A stool was there of ivory wrought.
King Marsil bade a book be brought,
Wherein was all the law contained
Mahound and Termagaunt ordained.

The Saracen hath sworn thereby,
If Roland in the rear-guard lie,
With all his men-at-arms to go,
And combat till the count lay low.
Sir Gan repeated, "Be it so."

XLIX.

King Marsil's foster-father came,
A heathen, Valdabrun by name.
He spake to Gan with laughter clear.
"My sword, that never found its peer,—
A thousand pieces would not buy
The riches in the hilt that lie,—
To you I give in guerdon free;
Your aid in Roland's fall to see,
Let but the rear-guard be his place."
"I trust," said Gan, "to do you grace."
Then each kissed other on the face.

L.

Next broke with jocund laughter in,
Another heathen, Climorin.
To Gan he said, "Accept my helm,
The best and trustiest in the realm,
Conditioned that your aid we claim
To bring the marchman unto shame."
"Be it," said Ganelon, "as you list."
And then on cheek and mouth they kissed.

LI.

Now Bramimonde, King Marsil's queen,
To Ganelon came with gentle mien.
"I love thee well, Sir Count," she spake,
"For my lord the king and his nobles' sake.
See these clasps for a lady's wrist,
Of gold, and jacinth, and amethyst,
That all the jewels of Rome outshine;
Never your Emperor owned so fine;
These by the queen to your spouse are sent."
The gems within his boot he pent.

LII.

Then did the king on his treasurer call,
"My gifts for Karl, are they ready all?"
"Yea, sire, seven hundred camels' load
Of gold and silver well bestowed,
And twenty hostages thereby,
The noblest underneath the sky."

LIII.

On Ganelon's shoulder King Marsil leant.
"Thou art sage," he said, "and of gallant bent;
But by all thy holiest law deems dear,
Let not thy thought from our purpose veer.

Ten mules' burthen I give to thee
Of gold, the finest of Araby;
Nor ever year henceforth shall pass
But it brings thee riches in equal mass.
Take the keys of my city gates,
Take the treasure that Karl awaits—
Render them all; but oh, decide
That Roland in the rear-guard bide;
So may I find him by pass or height,
As I swear to meet him in mortal fight."
Cried Gan, "Meseemeth too long we stay,"
Sprang on his charger and rode away.

LIV.

The Emperor homeward hath turned his face,
To Gailne city he marched apace,*
(By Roland erst in ruins strown—
Deserted thence it lay and lone,
Until a hundred years had flown).
Here waits he, word of Gan to gain
With tribute of the land of Spain;
And here, at earliest break of day,
Came Gan where the encampment lay.

LV.

The Emperor rose with the day dawn clear,
Failed not Matins and Mass to hear,

* See Note U.

Sate at his tent on the fair green sward,
Roland and Olivier nigh their lord,
Duke Naimes and all his peers of fame.
Gan the felon, the perjured, came—
False was the treacherous tale he gave,—
And these his words, "May God you save!
I bear you Saragossa's keys,
Vast the treasure I bring with these,
And twenty hostages; guard them well.
The noble Marsil bids me tell—
Not on him shall your anger fall,
If I fetch not the Algalif here withal;
For mine eyes beheld, beneath their ken,
Three hundred thousand armèd men,
With sword and casque and coat of mail,
Put forth with him on thè sea to sail,
All for hate of the Christian creed,
Which they would neither hold nor heed.
They had not floated a league but four,
When a tempest down on their galleys bore.
Drowned they lie to be seen no more.
If the Algalif were but living wight,
He had stood this morn before your sight.
Sire, for the Saracen king I say,
Ere ever a month shall pass away,
On into France he will follow free,
Bend to our Christian law the knee,

Homage swear for his Spanish land,
And hold the realm at your command."
"Now praise to God," the Emperor said,
"And thanks, my Ganelon, well you sped."
A thousand clarions then resound,
The sumpter-mules are girt on ground,
For France, for France the Franks are bound.

LVI.

Karl the Great hath wasted Spain,
Her cities sacked, her castles ta'en;
But now "My wars are done," he cried,
"And home to gentle France we ride."
Count Roland plants his standard high
Upon a peak against the sky;
The Franks around encamping lie.
Alas! the heathen host the while,
Through valley deep and dark defile,
Are riding on the Christians' track,
All armed in steel from breast to back;
Their lances poised, their helmets laced,
Their falchions glittering from the waist,
Their bucklers from the shoulder swung,
And so they ride the steeps among,
Till, in a forest on the height,
They rest to wait the morning light.
Four hundred thousand couching there.
O God! the Franks are unaware.

LVII.

The day declined, night darkling crept,
And Karl, the mighty Emperor, slept.
He dreamt a dream: he seemed to stand
In Cizra's pass, with lance in hand.
Count Ganelon came athwart, and lo,
He wrenched the ashen spear him fro,
Brandished and shook it aloft with might,
Till it brake in pieces before his sight;
High towards heaven the splinters flew;
Karl awoke not, he dreamed anew.

LVIII.

In his second dream he seemed to dwell
In his palace of Aix, at his own Chapelle.
A bear seized grimly his right arm on,
And bit the flesh to the very bone.
Anon a leopard from Arden wood,
Fiercely flew at him where he stood.
When lo! from his hall, with leap and bound,
Sprang to the rescue a gallant hound.
First from the bear the ear he tore,
Then on the leopard his fangs he bore.
The Franks exclaim, "'Tis a stirring fray,
But who the victor none may say."
Karl awoke not—he slept alway.

LIX.

The night wore by, the day dawn glowed,
Proudly the Emperor rose and rode,
Keenly and oft his host he scanned.
"Lords, my barons, survey this land,
See the passes so strait and steep:
To whom shall I trust the rear to keep?"
"To my stepson, Roland," Count Gan replied.
"Knight like him have you none beside."
The Emperor heard him with moody brow.
"A living demon," he said, "art thou;
Some mortal rage hath thy soul possessed.
To head my vanguard, who then were best?"
"Ogier," he answered, "the gallant Dane,
Braver baron will none remain."

LX.

Roland, when thus the choice he saw,
Spake, full knightly, by knightly law:
"Sir Stepsire, well may I hold thee dear,
That thou hast named me to guard the rear;
Karl shall lose not, if I take heed,
Charger, or palfrey, or mule or steed,
Hackney or sumpter that groom may lead;
The reason else our swords shall tell."
"It is sooth," said Gan, "and I know it well."

LXI.

Fiercely once more Count Roland turned
To speak the scorn that in him burned.
"Ha! deem'st thou, dastard, of dastard race,
That I shall drop the glove in place,
As in sight of Karl thou didst drop the mace?"

LXII.

Then of his uncle he made demand:
"Yield me the bow that you hold in hand;
Never of me shall the tale be told,
As of Ganelon erst, that it failed my hold."
Sadly the Emperor bowed his head,
With working finger his beard he spread,
Tears in his own despite he shed.

LXIII.

But soon Duke Naimes doth by him stand—
No better vassal in all his band.
"You have seen and heard it all, O sire,
Count Roland waxeth much in ire.
On him the choice for the rear-guard fell,
And where is baron could speed so well?
Yield him the bow that your arm hath bent,
And let good succour to him be lent."
The Emperor reached it forth, and lo!
He gave, and Roland received, the bow.

* See Note V.

LXIV.

"Fair Sir Nephew, I tell thee free.
Half of my host will I leave with thee."
"God be my judge," was the count's reply,
"If ever I thus my race belie.
But twenty thousand with me shall rest,
Bravest of all your Franks and best;
The mountain passes in safety tread,
While I breathe in life you have nought to dread."

LXV.*

Count Roland sprang to a hill-top's height,
And donned his peerless armour bright;
Laced his helm, for a baron made;
Girt Durindana, gold-hilted blade;†
Around his neck he hung the shield,
With flowers emblazoned was the field;
Nor steed but Veillantif will ride;
And he grasped his lance with its pennon's pride.
White was the pennon, with rim of gold;
Low to the handle the fringes rolled.
Who are his lovers men now may see;
And the Franks exclaim, "We will follow thee."

* See Note W. † See Note X.

LXVI.

Roland hath mounted his charger on ;
Sir Olivier to his side hath gone ;
Gerein and his fellow in arms, Gerier ;
Otho the count, and Berengier,
Samson, and with him Anseis old,
Gerard of Roussillon, the bold.
Thither the Gascon Engelier sped ;
" I go," said Turpin, " I pledge my head ; "
" And I with thee," Count Walter said ;
" I am Roland's man, to his service bound."
So twenty thousand knights were found.

LXVII.

Roland beckoned Count Walter then.
" Take of our Franks a thousand men ;
Sweep the heights and the passes clear,
That the Emperor's host may have nought to fear."
" I go," said Walter, " at your behest,"
And a thousand Franks around him pressed.
They ranged the heights and passes through,
Nor for evil tidings backward drew,
Until seven hundred swords outflew.
The lord of Belferna's land, that day,
King Almaris met him in deadly fray.

LXVIII.

Through Roncesvalles the march began ;
Ogier, the baron, led the van ;
For them was neither doubt nor fear,
Since Roland rested to guard the rear,
With twenty thousand in full array :
Theirs the battle—be God their stay.
Gan knows all ; in his felon heart
Scarce hath he courage to play his part.

LXIX.

High were the peaks, and the valleys deep,
The mountains wondrous dark and steep ;
Sadly the Franks through the passes wound,
Full fifteen leagues did their tread resound.
To their own great land they are drawing nigh,
And they look on the fields of Gascony.
They think of their homes and their manors there,
Their gentle spouses and damsels fair.
Is none but for pity the tear lets fall ;
But the anguish of Karl is beyond them all.
His sister's son at the gates of Spain
Smites on his heart, and he weeps amain.

LXX.

On the Spanish marches the twelve abide,
With twice ten thousand Franks beside.
Fear to die have they none, nor care:
But Karl returns into France the fair;
Beneath his mantle his face he hides.
Naimes, the duke, at his bridle rides.
"Say, sire, what grief doth your heart oppress?"
"To ask," he said, "brings worse distress;
I cannot but weep for heaviness.
By Gan the ruin of France is wrought.
In an angel's vision, last night, methought
He wrested forth from my hand the spear:
'Twas he gave Roland to guard the rear.
God! should I lose him, my nephew dear,
Whom I left on a foreign soil behind,
His peer on earth I shall never find!"

LXXI.

Karl the Great cannot choose but weep,
For him hath his host compassion deep;
And for Roland, a marvellous boding dread.
It was Gan, the felon, this treason bred;
He hath heathen gifts of silver and gold,
Costly raiment, and silken fold,
Horses and camels, and mules and steeds.—
But lo! King Marsil the mandate speeds,

To his dukes, his counts, and his vassals all,
To each almasour and amiral.
And so, before three suns had set,
Four hundred thousand in muster met.
Through Saragossa the tabors sound;
On the loftiest turret they raise Mahound:
Before him the pagans bend and pray,
Then mount and fiercely ride away,
Across Cerdagna, by vale and height,
Till stream the banners of France in sight,
Where the peers of Carlemaine proudly stand,
And the shock of battle is hard at hand.

LXXII.

Up to King Marsil his nephew rode,
With a mule for steed, and a staff for goad;
Free and joyous his accents fell,
"Fair Sir King, I have served you well,
So let my toils and my perils tell.
I have fought and vanquished for you in field.
One good boon for my service yield,—
Be it mine on Roland to strike the blow;
At point of lance will I lay him low;
And so Mohammed to aid me deign,
Free will I sweep the soil of Spain,
From the gorge of Aspra to Dourestan,
Till Karl grows weary such wars to plan.

Then for your life have you won repose."
King Marsil on him his glove bestows.

LXXIII.

His nephew, while the glove he pressed,
Proudly once more the king addressed.
"Sire, you have crowned my dearest vow;
Name me eleven of your barons now,
In battle against the twelve to bide."
Falsaron first to the call replied;
Brother to Marsil, the king, was he;
"Fair Sir Nephew, I go with thee;
In mortal combat we front, to-day,
The rear-guard of the grand array.
Foredoomed to die by our spears are they."

LXXIV.

King Corsablis the next drew nigh,
Miscreant Monarch of Barbary;
Yet he spake like vassal staunch and bold—
Blench would he not for all God's gold.
The third, Malprimis, of Brigal's breed,
More fleet of foot than the fleetest steed,
Before King Marsil he raised his cry,
"On unto Roncesvalles I:
In mine encounter shall Roland die."

LXXV.

An Emir of Balaguet came in place,
Proud of body, and fair of face;
Since first he sprang on steed to ride,
To wear his harness was all his pride;
For feats of prowess great laud he won;
Were he Christian, nobler baron none.
To Marsil came he, and cried aloud,
"Unto Roncęsvalles mine arm is vowed;
May I meet with Roland and Olivier,
Or the twelve together, their doom is near.
The Franks shall perish in scathe and scorn;
Karl the Great, who is old and worn,
Weary shall grow his hosts to lead,
And the land of Spain be for ever freed."
King Marsil's thanks were his gracious meed.

LXXVI.

A Mauritanian Almasour *
(Breathed not in Spain such a felon Moor)
Stepped unto Marsil, with braggart boast:
"Unto Roncesvalles I lead my host,
Full twenty thousand, with lance and shield.
Let me meet with Roland upon the field,
Lifelong tears for him Karl shall yield."

* See Note Y.

LXXVII.

Turgis, Count of Tortosa, came.
Lord of the city, he bears its name.
Scathe to the Christian to him is best,
And in Marsil's presence he joined the rest.
To the king he said, " Be fearless found ;
Peter of Rome cannot mate Mahound.
If we serve him truly, we win this day ;
Unto Roncesvalles I ride straightway.
No power shall Roland from slaughter save :
See the length of my peerless glaive,
That with Durindana to cross I go,
And who the victor, ye then shall know.
Sorrow and shame old Karl shall share,
Crown on earth never more shall wear."

LXXVIII.

Lord of Valtierra was Escremis ;
Saracen he, and the region his ;
He cried to Marsil, amid the throng,
" Unto Roncesvalles I spur along,
The pride of Roland in dust to tread,
Nor shall he carry from thence his head ;
Nor Olivier who leads the band.
And of all the twelve is the doom at hand.
The Franks shall perish, and France be lorn,
And Karl of his bravest vassals shorn."

LXXIX.

Estorgan next to Marsil hied,
With Estramarin his mate beside.
Hireling traitors and felons they.
Aloud cried Marsil, "My lords, away
Unto Roncesvalles, the pass to gain,
Of my people's captains ye shall be twain."
"Sire, full welcome to us the call,
On Roland and Olivier we fall.
None the twelve from their death shall screen,
The swords we carry are bright and keen;
We will dye them red with the hot blood's vent,
The Franks shall perish and Karl lament.
We will yield all France as your tribute meet.
Come, that the vision your eyes may greet;
The Emperor's self shall be at your feet."

LXXX.

With speed came Margaris—lord was he
Of the land of Sibilie to the sea;
Beloved of dames for his beauty's sake,
Was none but joy in his look would take,
The goodliest knight of heathenesse,—
And he cried to the king over all the press,
"Sire, let nothing your heart dismay;
I will Roland in Roncesvalles slay,

Nor thence shall Olivier scatheless come,
The peers await but their martyrdom.
The Emir of Primis bestowed this blade;
Look on its hilt, with gold inlaid;
It shall crimsoned be with the red blood's trace:
Death to the Franks, and to France disgrace!
Karl the old, with his beard so white,
Shall have pain and sorrow both day and night;
France shall be ours ere a year go by;
At Saint Denys' bourg shall our leaguer lie."
King Marsil bent him reverently.

LXXXI.

Chernubles is there, from the valley black,
His long hair makes on the earth its track;
A load, when it lists him, he bears in play,
Which four mules' burthen would well outweigh.
Men say, in the land where he was born
Nor shineth sun, nor springeth corn,
Nor falleth rain nor droppeth dew;
The very stones are of sable hue.
'Tis the home of demons, as some assert.
And he cried, "My good sword have I girt,
In Roncesvalles to dye it red.
Let Roland but in my pathway tread,
Trust ye to me that I strike him dead,

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His Durindana beat down with mine.
The Franks shall perish and France decline."
Thus were mustered King Marsil's peers,
With a hundred thousand heathen spears.
In haste to press to the battle on,
In a pine-tree forest their arms they don.

LXXXII.

They don their hauberks of Saracen mould,
Wrought for the most with a triple fold;
In Saragossa their helms were made;
Steel of Vienne was each girded blade;
Valentia lances and targets bright,
Pennons of azure and red and white.
They leave their sumpters and mules aside,
Leap on their chargers, and serried ride.
Bright was the sunshine and fair the day;
Their arms resplendent gave back the ray.
Then sound a thousand clarions clear,
Till the Franks the mighty clangour hear.
"Sir Comrade," said Olivier, "I trow
There is battle at hand with the Saracen foe."
"God grant," said Roland, "it may be so.
Here our post for our king we hold;
For his lord the vassal bears heat and cold,
Toil and peril endures for him,
Risks in his service both life and limb.

For mighty blows let our arms be strung,
Lest songs of scorn be against us sung.
With the Christian is good, with the heathen ill:
No dastard part shall ye see me fill."

PART II.

RONCESVALLES.

[The stanzas of the translation not found in the Oxford MS., but taken from the stanzas inserted from other versions by M. Gautier, are, as regards Part II., the following : stanzas 113, 114, 115, 118, 119, 120, 122, 123, 126, 127, 139, 143, 144, 145, 146, 163].

The Prelude of the Great Battle.

LXXXIII.

OLIVIER clomb to a mountain height,
Glanced through the valley that stretched to right;
He saw advancing the Saracen men,
And thus to Roland he spake agen:
"What sights and sounds from the Spanish side,
White gleaming hauberks and helms in pride?
In deadliest wrath our Franks shall be!
Ganelon wrought this perfidy;
It was he who doomed us to hold the rear."
"Hush," said Roland; "O Olivier,
No word be said of my stepsire here."

LXXXIV.

Sir Olivier to the peak hath clomb,
Looks far on the realm of Spain therefrom;
He sees the Saracen power arrayed,—
Helmets gleaming with gold inlaid,

Shields and hauberks in serried row,
Spears with pennons that from them flow.
He may not reckon the mighty mass,
So far their numbers his thought surpass.
All in bewilderment and dismay,
Down from the mountain he takes his way,
Comes to the Franks the tale to say.

LXXXV.

"I have seen the paynim," said Olivier.
"Never on earth did such host appear:
A hundréd thousand with targets bright,
With helmets laced and hauberks white,
Erect and shining their lances tall;
Such battle as waits you did ne'er befall.
My Lords of France, be God your stay,
That you be not vanquished in field to-day."
"Accursed," say the Franks, "be they who fly.
None shall blench from the fear to die."

Roland's Pride.

LXXXVI.

"In mighty strength are the heathen crew,"
Olivier said, "and our Franks are few;
My comrade, Roland, sound on your horn;
Karl will hear and his host return."

"I were mad," said Roland, "to do such deed;
Lost in France were my glory's meed.
My Durindana shall smite full hard,
And her hilt be red to the golden guard.
The heathen felons shall find their fate;
Their death, I swear, in the pass they wait."

LXXXVII.

"O Roland, sound on your ivory horn,
To the ear of Karl shall the blast be borne:
He will bid his legions backward bend,
And all his barons their aid will lend."
"Now God forbid it, for very shame,
That for me my kindred were stained with blame,
Or that gentle France to such vileness fell:
This good sword that hath served me well,
My Durindana such strokes shall deal,
That with blood encrimsoned shall be the steel.
By their evil star are the felons led;
They shall all be numbered among the dead."

LXXXVIII.

"Roland, Roland, yet wind one blast!
Karl will hear ere the gorge be passed,
And the Franks return on their path full fast."
"I will not sound on mine ivory horn:
It shall never be spoken of me in scorn,

That for heathen felons one blast I blew;
I may not dishonour my lineage true.
But I will strike, ere this fight be o'er,
A thousand strokes and seven hundred more,
And my Durindana shall drip with gore.
Our Franks will bear them like vassals brave.
The Saracens flock but to find a grave."

LXXXIX.

"I deem of neither reproach nor stain.
I have seen the Saracen host of Spain,
Over plain and valley and mountain spread,
And the regions hidden beneath their tread.
Countless the swarm of the foe, and we
A marvellous little company."
Roland answered him, "All the more
My spirit within me burns therefore.
God and his angels of heaven defend
That France through me from her glory bend.
Death were better than fame laid low.
Our Emperor loveth a downright blow."

XC.

Roland is daring and Olivier wise,
Both of marvellous high emprise;
On their chargers mounted, and girt in mail,
To the death in battle they will not quail.

Brave are the counts, and their words are high,
And the Pagans are fiercely riding nigh.
"See, Roland, see them, how close they are,
The Saracen foemen, and Karl how far!
Thou didst disdain on thy horn to blow.
Were the king but here we were spared this woe.
Look up through Aspra's dread defile,
Where standeth our doomed rear-guard the while;
They will do their last brave feat this day,
No more to mingle in mortal fray."
"Hush!" said Roland, "the craven tale—
Foul fall who carries a heart so pale;
Foot to foot shall we hold the place,
And rain our buffets and blows apace."

XCI.

When Roland felt that the battle came,
Lion or leopard to him were tame;
He shouted aloud to his Franks, and then
Called to his gentle compeer agen.
"My friend, my comrade, my Olivier,
The Emperor left us his bravest here;
Twice ten thousand he set apart,
And he knew among them no dastard heart.
For his lord the vassal must bear the stress
Of the winter's cold and the sun's excess—
Peril his flesh and his blood thereby:

Strike thou with thy good lance-point, and I
With Durindana, the matchless glaive
Which the king himself to my keeping gave,
That he who wears it when I lie cold
May say 'twas the sword of a vassal bold."

XCII.

Archbishop Turpin, above the rest,
Spurred his steed to a jutting crest.
His sermon thus to the Franks he spake :—
"Lords, we are here for our monarch's sake ;
Hold we for him, though our death should come ;
Fight for the succour of Christendom.
The battle approaches—ye know it well,
For ye see the ranks of the infidel.
Cry *mea culpa*, and lowly kneel ;
I will assoil you, your souls to heal.
In death ye are holy martyrs crowned."
The Franks alighted, and knelt on ground ;
In God's high name the host he blessed,
And for penance gave them—to smite their best.

XCIII.

The Franks arose from bended knee,
Assoiled, and from their sins set free ;
The archbishop blessed them fervently :

Then each one sprang on his bounding barb,
Armed and laced in knightly garb,
Apparelled all for the battle line.
At last said Roland, "Companion mine,
Too well the treason is now displayed,
How Ganelon hath our band betrayed.
To him the gifts and the treasures fell;
But our Emperor will avenge us well.
King Marsil deemeth us bought and sold;
The price shall be with our good swords told."

XCIV.

Roland rideth the passes through,
On Veillantif, his charger true;
Girt in his harness that shone full fair,
And baron-like his lance he bare.
The steel erect in the sunshine gleamed,
With the snow-white pennon that from it streamed;
The golden fringes beat on his hand.
Joyous of visage was he, and bland,
Exceeding beautiful of frame;
And his warriors hailed him with glad acclaim.
Proudly he looked on the heathen ranks,
Humbly and sweetly upon his Franks.
Courteously spake he, in words of grace—
"Ride, my barons, at gentle pace.
The Saracens here to their slaughter toil:

Reap we, to-day, a glorious spoil,
Never fell to Monarch of France the like."
At his word, the hosts are in act to strike.

XCV.

Said Olivier, "Idle is speech, I trow;
Thou didst disdain on thy horn to blow.
Succour of Karl is far apart;
Our strait he knows not, the noble heart:
Not to him nor his host be blame;
Therefore, barons, in God's good name,
Press ye onward, and strike your best,
Make your stand on this field to rest;
Think but of blows, both to give and take,
Never the watchword of Karl forsake."
Then from the Franks resounded high—
"*Montjoie!*" * Whoever had heard that cry
Would hold remembrance of chivalry.
Then ride they—how proudly, O God, they ride!—
With rowels dashed in their coursers' side.
Fearless, too, are their paynim foes.
Frank and Saracen, thus they close.

* See Note Z.

The Melay.

XCVI.

King Marsil's nephew, Aelroth his name,
Vaunting in front of the battle came,
Words of scorn on our Franks he cast:
"Felon Franks, ye are met at last,
By your chosen guardian betrayed and sold,
By your king left madly the pass to hold.
This day shall France of her fame be shorn,
And from Karl the mighty his right arm torn."
Roland heard him—in wrath and pain!—
He spurred his steed, he slacked the rein,
Drave at the heathen with might and main,
Shattered his shield and his hauberk broke,
Right to the breast-bone went the stroke;
Pierced him, spine and marrow through,
And the felon's soul from his body flew.
A moment reeled he upon his horse,
Then all heavily dropped the corse;
Wrenched was his neck as on earth he fell,
Yet would Roland scorn with scorn repel.
"Thou dastard! never hath Karl been mad,
Nor love for treason or traitors had.
To guard the passes he left us here,
Like a noble king and cavalier.

Nor shall France this day her fame forego.
Strike in, my barons; the foremost blow
Dealt in the fight doth to us belong:
We have the right, and these dogs the wrong."

XCVII.

A duke was there, named Falsaron,
Of the land of Dathan and Abiron;
Brother to Marsil, the king, was he;
More miscreant felon ye might not see.
Huge of forehead, his eyes between,
A span of a full half-foot, I ween.
Bitter sorrow was his, to mark
His nephew before him lie slain and stark.
Hastily came he from forth the press,
Raising the war-cry of heathenesse.
Braggart words from his lips were tost:
"This day the honour of France is lost."
Hotly Sir Olivier's anger stirs;
He pricked his steed with the golden spurs,
Fairly dealt him a baron's blow,
And hurled him dead from the saddle-bow.
Buckler and mail were reft and rent,
And the pennon's flaps to his heart's blood went.
He saw the miscreant stretched on earth:
"Caitiff, thy threats are of little worth.
On, Franks! the felons before us fall;
Montjoie!" 'Tis the emperor's battle-call.

XCVIII.

A king was there of a strange countrie,
King Corsablis of Barbary;
Before the Saracen van he cried,
"Right well may we in this battle bide;
Puny the host of the Franks I deem,
And those that front us, of vile esteem.
Not one by succour of Karl shall fly;
The day hath dawned that shall see them die."
Archbishop Turpin hath heard him well;
No mortal hates he with hate so fell:
He pricked with spurs of the fine gold wrought,
And in deadly passage the heathen sought;
Shield and corselet were pierced and riven,
And the lance's point through his body driven;
To and fro, at the mighty thrust,
He reeled, and then fell stark in dust.
Turpin looked on him, stretched on ground.
"Loud thou liest, thou heathen hound!
King Karl is ever our pride and stay;
Nor one of the Franks shall blench this day,
But your comrades here on the field shall lie;
I bring you tidings: ye all shall die.
Strike, Franks! remember your chivalry;
First blows are ours, high God be praised!"
Once more the cry, "*Montjoie!*" he raised.

XCIX.

Gerein to Malprimis of Brigal sped,
Whose good shield stood him no whit in stead;
Its knob of crystal was cleft in twain,
And one half fell on the battle plain.
Right through the hauberk, and through the skin,
He drave the lance to the flesh within;
Prone and sudden the heathen fell,
And Satan carried his soul to hell.

C.

Anon, his comrade in arms, Gerier,
Spurred at the Emir with levelled spear;
Severed his shield and his mail apart,—
The lance went through them, to pierce his heart.
Dead on the field at the blow he lay.
Olivier said, "'Tis a stirring fray."

CI.

At the Almasour's shield Duke Samson rode—
With blazon of flowers and gold it glowed;
But nor shield nor cuirass availed to save,
When through heart and lungs the lance he drave.
Dead lies he, weep him who list or no.
The Archbishop said, "'Tis a baron's blow."

CII.

Anseis cast his bridle free;
At Turgis, Tortosa's lord, rode he:
Above the centre his shield he smote,
Brake his mail with its double coat,
Speeding the lance with a stroke so true,
That the iron traversed his body through.
So lay he lifeless, at point of spear.
Said Roland, "Struck like a cavalier."

CIII.

Engelier, Gascon of Bordeaux,
On his courser's mane let the bridle flow:
Smote Escremis, from Valtierra sprung,
Shattered the shield from his neck that swung;
On through his hauberk's vental pressed,
And betwixt his shoulders pierced his breast.
Forth from the saddle he cast him dead.
"So shall ye perish all," he said.

CIV.

The heathen Estorgan was Otho's aim:
Right in front of his shield he came;
Rent its colours of red and white,
Pierced the joints of his harness bright,
Flung him dead from his bridle rein.
Said Otho, "Thus shall ye all be slain."

CV.

Berengier smote Estramarin,
Planting his lance his heart within,
Through shivered shield and hauberk torn.
The Saracen to earth was borne
Amid a thousand of his train.
Thus ten of the heathen twelve are slain;
But two are left alive I wis—
Chernubles and Count Margaris.

CVI.

Count Margaris was a valiant knight,
Stalwart of body, and lithe and light:
He spurred his steed unto Olivier,
Brake his shield at the golden sphere,
Pushed the lance till it touched his side;
God of His grace made it harmless glide.
Margaris rideth unhurt withal,
Sounding his trumpet, his men to call.

CVII.

Mingled and marvellous grows the fray,
And in Roland's heart is no dismay.
He fought with lance while his good lance stood;
Fifteen encounters have strained its wood.
At the last it brake; then he grasped in hand

His Durindana, his naked brand.
He smote Chernubles' helm upon,
Where, in the centre, carbuncles shone:
Down through his coif and his fell of hair,
Betwixt his eyes came the falchion bare,
Down through his plated harness fine,
Down through the Saracen's chest and chine,
Down through the saddle with gold inlaid,
Till sank in the living horse the blade,
Severed the spine where no joint was found,
And horse and rider lay dead on ground.
"Caitiff, thou camest in evil hour;
To save thee passeth Mohammed's power.
Never to miscreants like to thee
Shall come the guerdon of victory."

CVIII.

Count Roland rideth the battle through,
With Durindana, to cleave and hew;
Havoc fell of the foe he made,
Saracen corse upon corse was laid,
The field all flowed with the bright blood shed;
Roland, to corselet and arm, was red—
Red his steed to the neck and flank.
Nor is Olivier niggard of blows as frank;
Nor to one of the peers be blame this day,
For the Franks are fiery to smite and slay.

"Well fought," said Turpin, "our barons true!"
And he raised the war-cry, "*Montjoie!*" anew.

CIX.

Through the storm of battle rides Olivier,
His weapon, the butt of his broken spear,
Down upon Malseron's shield he beat,
Where flowers and gold emblazoned meet,
Dashing his eyes from forth his head:
Low at his feet were the brains bespread,
And the heathen lies with seven hundred dead!
Estorgus and Turgin next he slew,
Till the shaft he wielded in splinters flew.
"Comrade!" said Roland, "what makest thou?
Is it time to fight with a truncheon now?
Steel and iron such strife may claim;
Where is thy sword, Hauteclere by name,
With its crystal pommel and golden guard?"
"Of time to draw it I stood debarred,
Such stress was on me of smiting hard."

CX.

Then drew Sir Olivier forth his blade,
As had his comrade Roland prayed.
He proved it in knightly wise straightway,
On the heathen Justin of Val Ferrée.
At a stroke he severed his head in two,

Cleft him body and harness through;
Down through the gold-incrusted selle,
To the horse's chine, the falchion fell:
Dead on the sward lay man and steed.
Said Roland, "My brother, henceforth, indeed!
The Emperor loves us for such brave blows!"
Around them the cry of "*Montjoie!*" arose.

CXI.

Gerein his Sorel rides; Gerier
Is mounted on his own Pass-deer;
The reins they slacken, and prick full well
Against the Saracen Timozel.
One smites his cuirass, and one his shield,
Break in his body the spears they wield;
They cast him dead on the fallow mould.
I know not, nor yet to mine ear was told,
Which of the twain was more swift and bold.
Then Espreveris, Borel's son,
By Engelier unto death was done.
Archbishop Turpin slew Siglorel,
The wizard, who erst had been in hell,
By Jupiter thither in magic led.
"Well have we 'scaped," the archbishop said:
"Crushed is the caitiff," Count Roland replies,
"Olivier, brother, such strokes I prize!"

CXII.

Furious waxeth the fight, and strange;
Frank and heathen their blows exchange;
While these defend, and those assail,
And their lances broken and bloody fail.
Ensign and pennon are rent and cleft,
And the Franks of their fairest youth bereft,
Who will look on mother or spouse no more,
Or the host that waiteth the gorge before.
Karl the Mighty may weep and wail;
What skilleth sorrow, if succour fail?
An evil service was Gan's that day,
When to Saragossa he bent his way,
His faith and kindred to betray.
But a doom thereafter awaited him—
Amerced in Aix, of life and limb,
With thirty of his kin beside,
To whom was hope of grace denied.

CXIII.*

King Almaris with his band, the while,
Wound through a marvellous strait defile,
Where doth Count Walter the heights maintain,
And the passes that lie at the gates of Spain.
"Gan, the traitor, hath made of us,"
Said Walter, "a bargain full dolorous."

*See Note AA.

CXIV.

King Almaris to the mount hath clomb,
With sixty thousand of heathendom.
In deadly wrath on the Franks they fall,
And with furious onset smite them all:
Routed, scattered, or slain they lie.
Then rose the wrath of Count Walter high;
His sword he drew, his helm he laced,
Slowly in front of the line he paced,
And with evil greeting his foemen faced.

CXV.

Right on his foemen doth Walter ride,
And the heathen assail him on every side;
Broken down was his shield of might,
Bruised and pierced was his hauberk white;
Four lances at once did his body wound:
No longer bore he—four times he swooned;
He turned perforce from the field aside,
Slowly adown the mount he hied,
And aloud to Roland for succour cried.

CXVI.

Wild and fierce is the battle still:
Roland and Olivier fight their fill;
The archbishop dealeth a thousand blows
Nor knoweth one of the peers repose;

The Franks are fighting commingled all,
And the foe in hundreds and thousands fall;
Choice have they none but to flee or die,
Leaving their lives despighteously.
Yet the Franks are reft of their chivalry,
Who will see nor parent nor kindred fond,
Nor Karl who waits them the pass beyond.

CXVII.

Now a wondrous storm o'er France hath passed,
With thunder-stroke and whirlwind's blast;
Rain unmeasured, and hail, there came,
Sharp and sudden the lightning's flame;
And an earthquake ran—the sooth I say,
From Besançon city to Wissant Bay;
From Saint Michael's Mount to thy shrine, Cologne,
House unrifted was there none.
And a darkness spread in the noontide high—
No light, save gleams from the cloven sky.
On all who saw came a mighty fear.
They said, "The end of the world is near."
Alas, they spake but with idle breath,—
'Tis the great lament for Roland's death.

CXVIII.

Dread are the omens and fierce the storm,
Over France the signs and wonders swarm:

* See Note BB.

From noonday on to the vesper hour,
Night and darkness alone have power;
Nor sun nor moon one ray doth shed,
Who sees it ranks him among the dead.
Well may they suffer such pain and woe,
When Roland, captain of all, lies low.
Never on earth hath his fellow been,
To slay the heathen or realms to win.

CXIX.

Stern and stubborn is the fight;
Staunch are the Franks with the sword to smite
Nor is there one but whose blade is red,
"*Montjoie!*" is ever their war-cry dread.
Through the land they ride in hot pursuit,
And the heathens feel 'tis a fierce dispute.

CXX.

In wrath and anguish, the heathen race
Turn in flight from the field their face;
The Franks as hotly behind them strain.
Then might ye look on a cumbered plain:
Saracens stretched on the green grass bare,
Helms and hauberks that shone full fair,
Standards riven and arms undone:
So by the Franks was the battle won.
The foremost battle that then befell—
O God, what sorrow remains to tell!

CXXI.

With heart and prowess the Franks have stood;
Slain was the heathen multitude;
Of a hundred thousand survive not two:
The archbishop crieth, "O staunch and true!
Written it is in the Frankish geste,
That our Emperor's vassals shall bear them best."
To seek their dead through the field they press,
And their eyes drop tears of tenderness;
Their hearts are turned to their kindred dear.
Marsil the while with his host is near.

CXXII.

Distraught was Roland with wrath and pain;
Distraught were the twelve of Carlemaine—
With deadly strokes the Franks have striven,
And the Saracen horde to the slaughter given;
Of a hundred thousand escaped but one—
King Margaris fled from the field alone;
But no disgrace in his flight he bore—
Wounded was he by lances four.
To the side of Spain did he take his way,
To tell King Marsil what chanced that day.

CXXIII.

Alone King Margaris left the field,
With broken spear and piercèd shield,

Scarce half a foot from the knob remained,
And his brand of steel with blood was stained;
On his body were four lance wounds to see:
Were he Christian, what a baron he!
He sped to Marsil his tale to tell;
Swift at the feet of the king he fell:
"Ride, sire, on to the field forthright,
You will find the Franks in an evil plight;
Full half and more of their host lies slain,
And sore enfeebled who yet remain;
Nor arms have they in their utmost need:
To crush them now were an easy deed."
Marsil listened with heart aflame.
Onward in search of the Franks he came.

CXXIV.

King Marsil on through the valley sped,
With the mighty host he has marshallèd.
Twice ten battalions the king arrayed:
Helmets shone, with their gems displayed,
Bucklers and braided hauberks bound,
Seven thousand trumpets the onset sound;
Dread was the clangour afar to hear.
Said Roland, "My brother, my Olivier,
Gan the traitor our death hath sworn,
Nor may his treason be now forborne.
To our Emperor vengeance may well belong,—

To us the battle fierce and strong;
Never hath mortal beheld the like.
With my Durindana I trust to strike;
And thou, my comrade, with thy Hauteclere:
We have borne them gallantly otherwhere.
So many fields 'twas ours to gain,
They shall sing against us no scornful strain."

CXXV.

As the Franks the heathen power descried,
Filling the champaign from side to side,
Loud unto Roland they made their call,
And to Olivier and their captains all.
Spake the archbishop as him became:
"O barons, think not one thought of shame;
Fly not, for sake of our God I pray,
That on you be chaunted no evil lay.
Better by far on the field to die;
For in sooth I deem that our end is nigh.
But in holy Paradise ye shall meet,
And with the innocents be your seat."
The Franks exult his words to hear,
And the cry, "*Montjoie!*" resoundeth clear.

CXXVI.

King Marsil on the hill-top bides,
While Grandonie with his légion rides.

He nails his flag with three nails of gold:
"Ride ye onwards, my barons bold."
Then loud a thousand clarions rang.
And the Franks exclaimed as they heard the clang—
"O God, our Father, what cometh on!
Woe that we ever saw Ganelon:
Foully, by treason, he us betrayed."
Gallantly then the archbishop said,
"Soldiers and lieges of God are ye,
And in Paradise shall your guerdon be.
To lie on its holy flowerets fair,
Dastard never shall enter there."
Say the Franks, "We will win it every one."
The archbishop bestoweth his benison.
Proudly mounted they at his word,
And, like lions chafed, at the heathen spurred.

CXXVII.

Thus doth King Marsil divide his men:
He keeps around him battalions ten.
As the Franks the other ten descry,
"What dark disaster," they said, "is nigh?
What doom shall now our peers betide?"
Archbishop Turpin full well replied,
"My cavaliers, of God the friends,
Your crown of glory to-day He sends,
To rest on the flowers of Paradise,

That never were won by cowardice."
The Franks made answer, "No cravens we,
Nor shall we gainsay God's decree;
Against the enemy yet we hold,—
Few may we be, but staunch and bold."
Their spurs against the foe they set,
Frank and paynim—once more they met.

CXXVIII.

A heathen of Saragossa came.
Full half the city was his to claim.
It was Climorin: hollow of heart was he,
He had plighted with Gan in perfidy,
What time each other on mouth they kissed,
And he gave him his helm and amethyst.
He would bring fair France from her glory down,
And from the Emperor wrest his crown.
He sate upon Barbamouche, his steed,
Than hawk or swallow more swift in speed.
Pricked with the spur, and the rein let flow,
To strike at the Gascon of Bordeaux,
Whom shield nor cuirass availed to save.
Within his harness the point he drave,
The sharp steel on through his body passed,
Dead on the field was the Gascon cast.
Said Climorin, "Easy to lay them low:
Strike in, my pagans, give blow for blow."
For their champion slain, the Franks cry woe.

CXXIX.

Sir Roland called unto Olivier,
"Sir Comrade, dead lieth Engelier;
Braver knight had we none than he."
"God grant," he answered, "revenge to me."
His spurs of gold to his horse he laid,
Grasping Hauteclere with its bloody blade.
Climorin smote he, with stroke so fell,
Slain at the blow was the infidel.
His soul the Enemy bore away.
Then turned he, Alphaien, the duke, to slay;
From Escababi the head he shore,
And Arabs seven to the earth he bore.
Saith Roland, "My comrade is much in wrath;
Won great laud by my side he hath;
Us such prowess to Karl endears.
Fight on, fight ever, my cavaliers."

CXXX.

Then came the Saracen Valdabrun,
Of whom King Marsil was foster-son.
Four hundred galleys he owned at sea,
And of all the mariners lord was he.
Jerusalem erst he had falsely won,
Profaned the temple of Solomon,
Slaying the Patriarch at the fount.
'Twas he who in plight unto Gan the count,

His sword with a thousand coins bestowed.
Gramimond named he the steed he rode,
Swifter than ever was falcon's flight;
Well did he prick with the sharp spurs bright,
To strike Duke Samson, the fearless knight.
Buckler and cuirass at once he rent,
And his pennon's flaps through his body sent;
Dead he cast him, with levelled spear.
"Strike, ye heathens; their doom is near."
The Franks cry woe for their cavalier.

CXXXI.

When Roland was ware of Samson slain,
Well may you weet of his bitter pain.
With bloody spur he his steed impelled,
While Durindana aloft he held,
The sword more costly than purest gold;
And he smote, with passion uncontrolled,
On the heathen's helm, with its jewelled crown,—
Through head, and cuirass, and body down,
And the saddle embossed with gold, till sank
The griding steel in the charger's flank;
Blame or praise him, the twain he slew.
"A fearful stroke!" said the heathen crew.
"I shall never love you," Count Roland cried.
"With you are falsehood and evil pride."

CXXXII.

From Afric's shore, of Afric's brood,
Malquiant, son of King Malcus, stood;
Wrought of the beaten gold, his vest
Flamed to the sun over all the rest.
Saut-perdu hath he named his horse,
Fleeter than ever was steed in course;
He smote Anseis upon the shield,
Cleft its vermeil and azure field,
Severed the joints of his hauberk good,
In his body planted both steel and wood.
Dead he lieth, his day is o'er,
And the Franks the loss of their peer deplore.

CXXXIII.

Turpin rideth the press among;
Never such priest the Mass hath sung,
Nor who hath such feats of his body done.
"God send thee," he said, "His malison!
For the knight thou slewest my heart is sore."
He sets the spur to his steed once more,
Smites the shield in Toledo made,
And the heathen low on the sward is laid.

CXXXIV.

Forth came the Saracen Grandonie,
Bestriding his charger Marmorie;

He was son unto Cappadocia's king,
And his steed was fleeter than bird on wing.
He let the rein on his neck decline,
And spurred him hard against Count Gerein,
Shattered the vermeil shield he bore,
And his armour of proof all open tore;
In went the pennon, so fierce the shock,
And he cast him, dead, on a lofty rock;
Then he slew his comrade in arms, Gerier,
Guy of Saint Anton and Berengier.
Next laid the great Duke Astor prone,
The Lord of Valence upon the Rhone.
Among the heathen great joy he cast.
Say the Franks, lamenting, "We perish fast."

CXXXV.

Count Roland graspeth his bloody sword:
Well hath he heard how the Franks deplored;
His heart is burning within his breast.
"God's malediction upon thee rest!
Right dearly shalt thou this blood repay."
His war-horse springs to the spur straightway,
And they come together—go down who may.

CXXXVI.

A gallant captain was Grandonie,
Great in arms and in chivalry.

Never, till then, had he Roland seen,
But well he knew him by form and mien,
By the stately bearing and glance of pride,
And a fear was on him he might not hide.
Fain would he fly, but it skills not here;
Roland smote him with stroke so sheer,
That it cleft the nasal his helm beneath,
Slitting nostril and mouth and teeth,
Through his body and mail of plate,
And the gilded saddle whereon he sate,
Deep the back of the charger through:
Beyond all succour the twain he slew.
From the Spanish ranks a wail arose,
And the Franks exult in their champion's blows.

CXXXVII.

The battle is wondrous yet, and dire,
And the Franks are cleaving in deadly ire;
Wrists and ribs and chines afresh,
And vestures, in to the living flesh;
On the green grass streaming the bright blood ran,
"O mighty country, Mahound thee ban!
For thy sons are strong over might of man."
And one and all unto Marsil cried,
"Hither, O king, to our succour ride."

CXXXVIII.

Marvellous yet is the fight around,
The Franks are thrusting with spears embrowned;
And great the carnage there to ken,
Slain and wounded and bleeding men,
Flung, each by other, on back or face.
Hold no more can the heathen race,
They turn and fly from the field apace;
The Franks as hotly pursue in chase.

CXXXIX.

Knightly the deeds by Roland done,
Respite or rest for his Franks is none;
Hard they ride on the heathen rear,
At trot or gallop in full career.
With crimson blood are their bodies stained,
And their brands of steel are snapped or strained;
And when the weapons their hands forsake,
Then unto trumpet and horn they take.
Serried they charge, in power and pride;
And the Saracens cry—"May ill betide
The hour we came on this fatal track!"
So on our host do they turn the back,
The Christians cleaving them as they fled,
Till to Marsil stretcheth the line of dead.

CXL.

King Marsil looks on his legions strown,
He bids the clarion blast be blown,
With all his host he onward speeds:
Abîme the heathen his vanguard leads.
No felon worse in the host than he,
Black of hue as a shrivelled pea;
He believes not in Holy Mary's Son;
Full many an evil deed hath done.
Treason and murder he prizeth more
Than all the gold of Galicia's shore;
Men never knew him to laugh nor jest,
But brave and daring among the best—
Endeared to the felon king therefore;
And the dragon flag of his race he bore.
The archbishop loathed him—full well he might,—
And as he saw him he yearned to smite.
To himself he speaketh, low and quick,
"This heathen seems much a heretic;
I go to slay him, or else to die,
For I love not dastards or dastardy."

CXLI.

The archbishop began the fight once more;
He rode the steed he had won of yore,

When in Denmark Grossaille the king he slew.
Fleet the charger, and fair to view:
His feet were small and fashioned fine,
Long the flank, and high the chine
Chest and croup full amply spread,
With taper ear and tawny head,
And snow-white tail and yellow mane:
To seek his peer on earth were vain.
The archbishop spurred him in fiery haste,
And, on the moment Abîme he faced,
Came down on the wondrous shield the blow,
The shield with amethysts all aglow,
Carbuncle and topaz, each priceless stone;
'Twas once the Emir Galafir's own;*
A demon gave it in Metas vale:
But when Turpin smote it might nought avail—
From side to side did his weapon trace,
And he flung him dead in an open space.
Say the Franks, "Such deeds beseem the brave.
Well the archbishop his cross can save."

CXLII.

Count Roland Olivier bespake:
"Sir Comrade, dost thou my thought partake?
A braver breathes not this day on earth
Than our archbishop in knightly worth.

* See Note CC.

How nobly smites he with lance and blade!"
Saith Olivier, "Yea, let us yield him aid;"
And the Franks once more the fight essayed.
Stern and deadly resound the blows.
For the Christians, alas, 'tis a tale of woes!

CXLIII.

The Franks of France of their arms are reft,
Three hundred blades alone are left.
The glittering helms they smite and shred,
And cleave asunder full many a head;
Through riven helm and hauberk rent,
Maim hand and foot and lineament.
"Disfigured are we," the heathens cry.
"Who guards him not hath but choice to die."
Right unto Marsil their way they take.
"Help, O king, for your people's sake!"
King Marsil heard their cry at hand,
"Mahound destroy thee, O mighty land;
Thy race came hither to crush mine own.
What cities wasted and overthrown,
Doth Karl of the hoary head possess!
Rome and Apulia his power confess,
Constantinople and Saxony;
Yet better die by the Franks than flee.
On, Saracens! recreant heart be none;
If Roland live, we are all foredone."

CXLIV.

Then with the lance did the heathens smite
On shield and gleaming helmet bright;
Of steel and iron arose the clang,
Towards heaven the flames and sparkles sprang;
Brains and blood on the champaign flowed:
But on Roland's heart is a dreary load,
To see his vassals lie cold in death;
His gentle France he remembereth,
And his uncle, the good King Carlemaine;
And the spirit within him groans for pain.

CXLV.

Count Roland entered within the prease,
And smote full deadly without surcease;
While Durindana aloft he held,
Hauberk and helm he pierced and quelled,
Intrenching body and hand and head.
The Saracens lie by the hundred dead,
And the heathen host is discomfited.

CXLVI.

Valiantly Olivier, otherwhere,
Brandished on high his sword Hauteclere—
Save Durindana, of swords the best.
To the battle proudly he him addressed.
His arms with the crimson blood were dyed.

"God, what a vassal!" Count Roland cried.
"O gentle baron, so true and leal,
This day shall set on our love the seal!
The Emperor cometh to find us dead,
For ever parted and severèd.
France never looked on such woful day;
Nor breathes a Frank but for us will pray,—
From the cloister cells shall the orisons rise,
And our souls find rest in Paradise."
Olivier heard him, amid the throng,
Spurrèd his steed to his side along.
Saith each to other, "Be near me still;
We will die together, if God so will."

CXLVII.

Roland and Olivier then are seen
To lash and hew with their falchions keen;
With his lance the archbishop thrusts and slays,
And the numbers slain we may well appraise;
In charter and writ is the tale expressed—
Beyond four thousand, saith the geste.
In four encounters they sped them well:
Dire and grievous the fifth befell.
The cavaliers of the Franks are slain
All but sixty, who yet remain;
God preserved them, that ere they die,
They may sell their lives full hardily.

The Horn.

CXLVIII.

As Roland gazed on his slaughtered men,
He bespake his gentle compeer agen:
"Ah, dear companion, may God thee shield!
Behold, our bravest lie dead on field!
Well may we weep for France the fair,
Of her noble barons despoiled and bare.
Had he been with us, our king and friend!
Speak, my brother, thy counsel lend,—
How unto Karl shall we tidings send?"
Olivier answered, "I wis not how.
Liefer death than be recreant now."

CXLIX.

"I will sound," said Roland, "upon my horn,
Karl, as he passeth the gorge, to warn.
The Franks, I know, will return apace."
Said Olivier, "Nay, it were foul disgrace
On your noble kindred to wreak such wrong;
They would bear the stain their lifetime long.
Erewhile I sought it, and sued in vain;
But to sound thy horn thou wouldst not deign.
Not now shall mine assent be won,
Nor shall I say it is knightly done.

Lo! both your arms are streaming red."
"In sooth," said Roland, "good strokes I sped."

CL.

Said Roland, "Our battle goes hard, I fear;
I will sound on my horn that Karl may hear."
"'Twere a deed unknightly," said Olivier;
"Thou didst disdain when I sought and prayed:
Saved had we been, with our Karl to aid;
Unto him and his host no blame shall be:
By this my beard, might I hope to see
My gentle sister Alda's face,
Thou shouldst never hold her in thine embrace."

CLI.

"Ah, why on me doth thine anger fall?"
"Roland, 'tis thou who hast wrought it all.
Valour and madness are scarce allied,—
Better discretion than daring pride.
All of thy folly our Franks lie slain,
Nor will render service to Karl again.
As I implored thee, if thou hadst done,
The king had come and the field were won;
Marsil captive, or slain, I trow.
Thy daring, Roland, hath wrought our woe.
No service more unto Karl we pay,

That first of men, till the judgment day;
Thou shalt die, and France dishonoured be,
Ended our loyal company—
A woful parting this eve shall see."

CLII.

Archbishop Turpin their strife hath heard,
His steed with the spurs of gold he spurred,
And thus rebuked them, riding near:
"Sir Roland, and thou, Sir Olivier,
Contend not, in God's great name, I crave.
Not now availeth the horn to save;
And yet behoves you to wind its call,—
Karl will come to avenge our fall,
Nor hence the foeman in joyance wend.
The Franks will all from their steeds descend;
When they find us slain and martyred here,
They will raise our bodies on mule and bier,
And, while for pity aloud they weep,
Lay us in hallowed earth to sleep;
Nor wolf nor boar on our limbs shall feed."
Said Roland, "Yea, 'tis a goodly rede."

CLIII.

Then to his lips the horn he drew,
And full and lustily he blew.
The mountain peaks soared high around;

Thirty leagues was borne the sound.
Karl hath heard it, and all his band.
"Our men have battle," he said, "on hand."
Ganelon rose in front and cried,
"If another spake, I would say he lied."

CLIV.

With deadly travail, in stress and pain,
Count Roland sounded the mighty strain.
Forth from his mouth the bright blood sprang,
And his temples burst for the very pang.
On and onward was borne the blast,
Till Karl hath heard, as the gorge he passed,
And Naimes and all his men of war.
"It is Roland's horn," said the Emperor,
"And, save in battle, he had not blown."
"Battle," said Ganelon, "is there none.
Old are you grown—all white and hoar;
Such words bespeak you a child once more.
Have you, then, forgotten Roland's pride,
Which I marvel God should so long abide,
How he captured Noples without your hest? *
Forth from the city the heathen pressed,
To your vassal Roland they battle gave,—
He slew them all with the trenchant glaive;
Then turned the waters upon the plain,

* See Note DD.

That trace of blood might none remain.
He would sound all day for a single hare:
'Tis a jest with him and his fellows there;
For who would battle against him dare?
Ride onward—wherefore this chill delay?
Your mighty land is yet far away."

CLV.

On Roland's mouth is the bloody stain,
Burst asunder his temple's vein;
His horn he soundeth in anguish drear.
King Karl and the Franks around him hear.
Said Karl, "That horn is long of breath."
Said Naimes, "'Tis Roland who travaileth.
There is battle yonder by mine avow.
He who betrayed him deceives you now.
Arm, sire; ring forth your rallying cry,
And stand your noble household by;
For you hear your Roland in jeopardy."

CLVI.

The king commands to sound the alarm.
To the trumpet the Franks alight and arm;
With casque and corselet and gilded brand,
Buckler and stalwart lance in hand,
Pennons of crimson and white and blue,
The barons leap on their steeds anew,
And onward spur the passes through;

Nor is there one but to other saith,
"Could we reach but Roland before his death,
Blows would we strike for him grim and great."
Ah! what availeth!—'tis all too late.

CLVII.

The evening passed into brightening dawn.
Against the sun their harness shone;
From helm and hauberk glanced the rays,
And their painted bucklers seemed all ablaze.
The Emperor rode in wrath apart.
The Franks were moody and sad of heart;
Was none but dropped the bitter tear,
For they thought of Roland with deadly fear.—
Then bade the Emperor take and bind
Count Gan, and had him in scorn consigned
To Besgun, chief of his kitchen train.
"Hold me this felon," he said, "in chain."
Then full a hundred round him pressed,
Of the kitchen varlets the worst and best;
His beard upon lip and chin they tore,
Cuffs of the fist each dealt him four,
Roundly they beat him with rods and staves;
Then around his neck those kitchen knaves
Flung a fetterlock fast and strong,
As ye lead a bear in a chain along;
On a beast of burthen the count they cast,
Till they yield him back to Karl at last.

CLVIII.

Dark, vast, and high the summits soar,
The waters down through the valleys pour.
The trumpets sound in front and rear,
And to Roland's horn make answer clear.
The Emperor rideth in wrathful mood,
The Franks in grievous solicitude;
Nor one among them can stint to weep,
Beseeching God that He Roland keep,
Till they stand beside him upon the field,
To the death together their arms to wield.
Ah, timeless succour, and all in vain!
Too long they tarried, too late they strain.

CLIX.

Onward King Karl in his anger goes;
Down on his harness his white beard flows.
The barons of France spur hard behind;
But on all there presseth one grief of mind—
That they stand not beside Count Roland then,
As he fronts the power of the Saracen.
Were he hurt in fight, who would then survive?
Yet three score barons around him strive.
And what a sixty! Nor chief nor king
Had ever such gallant following.

CLX.

Roland looketh to hill and plain,
He sees the lines of his warriors slain,
And he weeps like a noble cavalier,
"Barons of France, God hold you dear,
And take you to Paradise's bowers,
Where your souls may lie on the holy flowers;
Braver vassals on earth were none,
So many kingdoms for Karl ye won;
Years a-many your ranks I led,
And for end like this were ye nurturèd.
Land of France, thou art soothly fair;
To-day thou liest bereaved and bare;
It was all for me that your lives ye gave,
And I was helpless to shield or save.
May the great God save you who cannot lie.
Olivier, brother, I stand thee by;
I die of grief, if I 'scape unslain:
In, brother, in to the fight again."

CLXI.

Once more pressed Roland within the fight,
His Durindana he grasped with might;
Faldron of Pui did he cleave in two,
And twenty-four of their bravest slew.
Never was man on such vengeance bound;
And, as flee the roe-deer before the hound,

So in face of Roland the heathens flee.
Saith Turpin, "Right well this liketh me.
Such prowess a cavalier befits,
Who harness wears and on charger sits;
In battle shall he be strong and great,
Or I prize him not at four deniers' rate;
Let him else be monk in a cloister cell,
His daily prayers for our souls to tell."
Cries Roland, "Smite them, and do not spare."
Down once more on the foe they bear,
But the Christian ranks grow thinned and rare.

CLXII.

Who knoweth ransom is none for him,
Maketh in battle resistance grim;
The Franks like wrathful lions strike.
But King Marsil beareth him baron-like;
He bestrideth his charger, Gaignon hight,
And he pricketh him hard, Sir Beuve to smite,
The Lord of Beaune and of Dijon town,
Through shield and cuirass, he struck him down:
Dead past succour of man he lay.
Ivon and Ivor did Marsil slay;
Gerard of Roussillon beside.
Not far was Roland, and loud he cried,
"Be thou for ever in God's disgrace,
Who hast slain my fellows before my face

Before we part thou shalt blows essay,
And learn the name of my sword to-day.
Down, at the word, came the trenchant brand,
And from Marsil severed his good right hand:
With another stroke, the head he won
Of the fair-haired Jurfalez, Marsil's son.
"Help us, Mahound!" say the heathen train,
"May our gods avenge us on Carlemaine!
Such daring felons he hither sent,
Who will hold the field till their lives be spent."
"Let us flee and save us," cry one and all.
Unto flight a hundred thousand fall,
Nor can aught the fugitives recall.

CLXIII.

But what availeth? though Marsil fly,
His uncle, the Algalif, still is nigh;
Lord of Carthagena is he,
Of Alferna's shore and Garmalie,
And of Ethiopia, accursed land:
The black battalions at his command,
With nostrils huge and flattened ears,
Outnumber fifty thousand spears;
And on they ride in haste and ire,
Shouting their heathen war-cry dire.
"At last," said Roland, "the hour is come,
Here receive we our martyrdom;

Yet strike with your burnished brands—accursed
Who sells not his life right dearly first;
In life or death be your thought the same,
That gentle France be not brought to shame.
When the Emperor hither his steps hath bent,
And he sees the Saracens' chastisement,
Fifteen of their dead against our one,
He will breathe on our souls his benison."

Death of Olivier.

CLXIV.

When Roland saw the abhorrèd race,
Than blackest ink more black in face,
Who have nothing white but the teeth alone,
"Now," he said, "it is truly shown,
That the hour of our death is close at hand.
Fight, my Franks, 'tis my last command."
Said Olivier, "Shame is the laggard's due."
And at his word they engage anew.

CLXV.

When the heathens saw that the Franks were few,
Heart and strength from the sight they drew;
They said, "The Emperor hath the worse."
The Algalif sat on a sorrel horse;

He pricked with spurs of the gold refined,
Smote Olivier in the back behind.
On through his harness the lance he pressed,
Till the steel came out at the baron's breast.
"Thou hast it!" the Algalif, vaunting, cried.
"Ye were sent by Karl in an evil tide.
Of his wrongs against us he shall not boast;
In thee alone I avenge our host."

CLXVI.

Olivier felt the deathly wound,
Yet he grasped Hauteclere, with its steel embrowned;
He smote on the Algalif's crest of gold,—
Gem and flowers to the earth were rolled;
Clave his head to the teeth below,
And struck him dead with the single blow.
"All evil, caitiff, thy soul pursue.
Full well our Emperor's loss I knew;
But for thee—thou goest not hence to boast
To wife or dame on thy natal coast,
Of one denier from the Emperor won,
Or of scathe to me or to others done."
Then Roland's aid he called upon.

CLXVII.

Olivier knoweth him hurt to death;
The more to vengeance he hasteneth;

Knightly as ever his arms he bore,
Staves of lances and shields he shore;
Sides and shoulders and hands and feet,—
Whose eyes soever the sight could greet,
How the Saracens all disfigured lie,
Corpse upon corpse, each other by,
Would think upon gallant deeds; nor yet
Doth he the war-cry of Karl forget—
"Montjoie!" he shouted, shrill and clear;
Then called to Roland, his friend and peer,
"Sir, my comrade, anear me ride;
This day of dolor shall us divide."

CLXVIII.

Roland looked Olivier in the face,—
Ghastly paleness was there to trace;
Forth from his wound did the bright blood flow,
And rain in showers to the earth below.
"O God!" said Roland, "is this the end
Of all thy prowess, my gentle friend?
Nor know I whither to bear me now:
On earth shall never be such as thou.
Ah, gentle France, thou art overthrown,
Reft of thy bravest, despoiled and lone;
The Emperor's loss is full indeed!"
At the word he fainted upon his steed.

CLXIX.

See Roland there on his charger swooned,
Olivier smitten with his death wound.
His eyes from bleeding are dimmed and dark,
Nor mortal, near or far, can mark;
And when his comrade beside him pressed,
Fiercely he smote on his golden crest;
Down to the nasal the helm he shred,
But passed no further, nor pierced his head.
Roland marvelled at such a blow,
And thus bespake him soft and low:
"Hast thou done it, my comrade, wittingly?
Roland who loves thee so dear, am I,
Thou hast no quarrel with me to seek?"
Olivier answered, "I hear thee speak,
But I see thee not. God seeth thee.
Have I struck thee, brother? Forgive it me."
"I am not hurt, O Olivier;
And in sight of God, I forgive thee here."
Then each to other his head hath laid,
And in love like this was their parting made.

CLXX.

Olivier feeleth his throe begin;
His eyes are turning his head within,
Sight and hearing alike are gone.
He alights and couches the earth upon;

His *Mea Culpa* aloud he cries,
And his hands in prayer unto God arise,
That He grant him Paradise to share,
That He bless King Karl and France the fair,
His brother Roland o'er all mankind;
Then sank his heart, and his head declined,
Stretched at length on the earth he lay,—
So passed Sir Olivier away.
Roland was left to weep alone:
Man so woful hath ne'er been known.

CLXXI.

When Roland saw that life had fled,
And with face to earth his comrade dead,
He thus bewept him, soft and still:
"Ah, friend, thy prowess wrought thee ill!
So many days and years gone by
We lived together, thou and I;
And thou hast never done me wrong,
Nor I to thee, our lifetime long.
Since thou art dead, to live is pain."
He swooned on Veillantif again,
Yet may not unto earth be cast,
His golden stirrups held him fast.

CLXXII.

When passed away had Roland's swoon,
With sense restored, he saw full soon

What ruin lay beneath his view.
His Franks have perished all save two—
The archbishop and Walter of Hum alone.
From the mountain-side hath Walter flown,
Where he met in battle the bands of Spain,
And the heathen won and his men were slain.
In his own despite to the vale he came;
Called unto Roland, his aid to claim.
"Ah, count! brave gentleman, gallant peer!
Where art thou? With thee I know not fear.
I am Walter, who vanquished Maelgut of yore,
Nephew to Drouin, the old and hoar.
For knightly deeds I was once thy friend.
I fought the Saracen to the end;
My lance is shivered, my shield is cleft,
Of my broken mail are but fragments left.
I bear in my body eight thrusts of spear;
I die, but I sold my life right dear."
Count Roland heard as he spake the word,
Pricked his steed, and anear him spurred.

CLXXIII.

"Walter," said Roland, "thou hadst affray
With the Saracen foe on the heights to-day.
Thou wert wont a valorous knight to be:
A thousand horsemen gave I thee;
Render them back, for my need is sore."

"Alas, thou seest them never more!
Stretched they lie on the dolorous ground,
Where myriad Saracen swarms we found,—
Armenians, Turks, and the giant brood
Of Balisa, famous for hardihood,
Bestriding their Arab coursers fleet,
Such host in battle 'twas ours to meet;
Nor vaunting thence shall the heathen go,—
Full sixty thousand on earth lie low.
With our brands of steel we avenged us well,
But every Frank by the foeman fell.
My hauberk plates are riven wide,
And I bear such wounds in flank and side,
That from every part the bright blood flows,
And feebler ever my body grows.
I am dying fast, I am well aware:
Thy liegeman I, and claim thy care.
If I fled perforce, thou wilt forgive,
And yield me succour whilst thou dost live."
Roland sweated with wrath and pain,
Tore the skirts of his vest in twain,
Bound Walter's every bleeding vein.

CLXXIV.

In Roland's sorrow his wrath arose,
Hotly he struck at the heathen foes,
Nor left he one of a score alive;

Walter slew six, the archbishop five.
The heathens cry, "What a felon three!
Look to it, lords, that they shall not flee.
Dastard is he who confronts them not;
Craven, who lets them depart this spot."
Their cries and shoutings begin once more,
And from every side on the Franks they pour.

CLXXV.

Count Roland in sooth is a noble peer;
Count Walter, a valorous cavalier;
The archbishop, in battle proved and tried.
Each struck as if knight there were none beside.
From their steeds a thousand Saracens leap,
Yet forty thousand their saddles keep;
I trow they dare not approach them near,
But they hurl against them lance and spear,
Pike and javelin, shaft and dart.
Walter is slain as the missiles part;
The archbishop's shield in pieces shred,
Riven his helm, and pierced his head;
His corselet of steel they rent and tore,
Wounded his body with lances four;
His steed beneath him dropped withal:
What woe to see the archbishop fall!

CLXXVI.

When Turpin felt him flung to ground,
And four lance wounds within him found,
He swiftly rose, the dauntless man,
To Roland looked, and nigh him ran.
Spake but, "I am not overthrown—
Brave warrior yields with life alone."
He drew Almace's burnished steel,
A thousand ruthless blows to deal.
In after time, the Emperor said
He found four hundred round him spread,—
Some wounded, others cleft in twain;
Some lying headless on the plain.
So Giles the saint, who saw it, tells,
For whom High God wrought miracles.
In Laon cell the scroll he wrote;
He little weets who knows it not.

CLXXVII.

Count Roland combateth nobly yet,
His body burning and bathed in sweat;
In his brow a mighty pain, since first,
When his horn he sounded, his temple burst;
But he yearns of Karl's approach to know,
And lifts his horn once more—but oh,
How faint and feeble a note to blow!

The Emperor listened, and stood full still.
"My lords," he said, "we are faring ill.
This day is Roland my nephew's last;
Like dying man he winds that blast.
On! Who would aid, for life must press.
Sound every trump our ranks possess."
Peal sixty thousand clarions high,
The hills re-echo, the vales reply.
It is now no jest for the heathen band.
"Karl!" they cry, "it is Karl at hand!"

CLXXVIII.

They said, "'Tis the Emperor's advance,
We hear the trumpets resound of France.
If he assail us, hope is vain;
If Roland live, 'tis war again,
And we lose for aye the land of Spain."
Four hundred in arms together drew,
The bravest of the heathen crew;
With serried power they on him press,
And dire in sooth is the count's distress.

CLXXIX.

When Roland saw his coming foes,
All proud and stern his spirit rose;
Alive he shall never be brought to yield:
Veillantif spurred he across the field,

With golden spurs he pricked him well,
To break the ranks of the infidel;
Archbishop Turpin by his side.
"Let us flee, and save us," the heathens cried;
"These are the trumpets of France we hear—
It is Karl, the mighty Emperor, near."

CLXXX.

Count Roland never hath loved the base,
Nor the proud of heart, nor the dastard race,—
Nor knight, but if he were vassal good,—
And he spake to Turpin, as there he stood;
"On foot are you, on horseback I;
For your love I halt, and stand you by.
Together for good and ill we hold;
I will not leave you for man of mould.
We will pay the heathen their onset back,
Norshall Durindana of blows be slack."
"Base," said Turpin, "who spares to smite:
When the Emperor comes, he will all requite."

CLXXXI.

The heathens said, "We were born to shame.
This day for our disaster came:
Our lords and leaders in battle lost,
And Karl at hand with his marshalled host;

We hear the trumpets of France ring out,
And the cry 'Montjoie!' their rallying shout.
Roland's pride is of such a height,
Not to be vanquished by mortal wight;
Hurl we our missiles, and hold aloof."
And the word they spake, they put in proof,—
They flung, with all their strength and craft,
Javelin, barb, and plumèd shaft.
Roland's buckler was torn and frayed,
His cuirass broken and disarrayed,
Yet entrance none to his flesh they made.
From thirty wounds Veillantif bled,
Beneath his rider they cast him, dead;
Then from the field have the heathen flown:
Roland remaineth, on foot, alone.

The Last Benediction of the Archbishop.

CLXXXII.

The heathens fly in rage and dread;
To the land of Spain have their footsteps sped;
Nor can Count Roland make pursuit—
Slain is his steed, and he rests afoot;
To succour Turpin he turned in haste,
The golden helm from his head unlaced,

Ungirt the corselet from his breast,
In stripes divided his silken vest;
The archbishop's wounds hath he staunched and bound,
His arms about him softly wound;
On the green sward gently his body laid,
And, with tender greeting, thus him prayed:
"For a little space, let me take farewell;
Our dear companions, who round us fell,
I go to seek; if I haply find,
I will place them at thy feet reclined."
"Go," said Turpin; "the field is thine—
To God the glory, 'tis thine and mine."

CLXXXIII.

Alone seeks Roland the field of fight,
He searcheth vale, he searcheth height.
Ivon and Ivor he found, laid low,
And the Gascon Engelier of Bourdeaux,
Gerein and his fellow in arms, Gerier;
Otho he found, and Berengier;
Samson the duke, and Anseis bold,
Gerard of Roussillon, the old.
Their bodies, one after one, he bore,
And laid them Turpin's feet before.
The archbishop saw them stretched arow,
Nor can he hinder the tears that flow;

In benediction his hands he spread :
" Alas ! for your doom, my lords," he said,
" That God in mercy your souls may give,
On the flowers of Paradise to live;
Mine own death cometh, with anguish sore
That I see mine Emperor never more."

CLXXXIV.

Once more to the field doth Roland wend,
Till he findeth Olivier his friend ;
The lifeless form to his heart he strained,
Bore him back with what strength remained,
On a buckler laid him, beside the rest,
The archbishop assoiled them all, and blessed.
Their dole and pity anew find vent,
And Roland maketh his fond lament :
" My Olivier, my chosen one,
Thou wert the noble Duke Renier's son,
Lord of the March unto Rivier vale.
To shiver lance and shatter mail,
The brave in council to guide and cheer,
To smite the miscreant foe with fear,—
Was never on earth such cavalier."

CLXXXV.

Dead around him his peers to see,
And the man he had loved so tenderly,

Fast the tears of Count Roland ran,
His visage discoloured became, and wan,
He swooned for sorrow beyond control.
"Alas," said Turpin, "how great thy dole!"

CLXXXVI.

To look on Roland swooning there,
Surpassed all sorrow he ever bare;
He stretched his hand, the horn he took,—
Through Roncesvalles there flowed a brook,—
A draught to Roland he thought to bring;
But his step was feeble and tottering,
Spent his strength, from waste of blood,—
He struggled on for scarce a rood,
When sank his heart, and drooped his frame,
And his mortal anguish on him came.

CLXXXVII.

Roland revived from his swoon again;
On his feet he rose, but in deadly pain;
He looked on high, and he looked below,
Till, a space his other companions fro,
He beheld the baron, stretched on sward,
The archbishop, vicar of God our Lord.
Mea Culpa was Turpin's cry,
While he raised his hands to heaven on high,

Imploring Paradise to gain.
So died the soldier of Carlemaine,—
With word or weapon, to preach or fight,
A champion ever of Christian right,
And a deadly foe of the infidel.
God's benediction with him dwell!

CLXXXVIII.

When Roland saw him stark on earth
(His very vitals were bursting forth,
And his brain was oozing from out his head),
He took the fair white hands outspread,
Crossed and clasped them upon his breast,
And thus his plaint to the dead addressed,—
So did his country's law ordain:—
"Ah, gentleman of noble strain,
I trust thee unto God the True,
Whose service never man shall do
With more devoted heart and mind:
To guard the faith, to win mankind,
From the apostles' days till now,
Such prophet never rose as thou.
Nor pain nor torment thy soul await,
But of Paradise the open gate."

The Death of Roland.

CLXXXIX.

Roland feeleth his death is near,
His brain is oozing by either ear.
For his peers he prayed—God keep them well;
Invoked the angel Gabriel.
That none reproach him, his horn he clasped;
His other hand Durindana grasped;
Then, far as quarrel from crossbow sent,
Across the march of Spain he went.
Where, on a mound, two trees between,
Four flights of marble steps were seen;
Backward he fell, on the field to lie;
And he swooned anon, for the end was nigh.

CXC.

High were the mountains and high the trees,
Bright shone the marble terraces;
On the green grass Roland hath swooned away.
A Saracen spied him where he lay:
Stretched with the rest, he had feigned him dead,
His face and body with blood bespread.
To his feet he sprang, and in haste he hied,—
He was fair and strong and of courage tried,

In pride and wrath he was overbold,—
And on Roland, body and arms, laid hold.
"The nephew of Karl is overthrown!
To Araby bear I this sword, mine own."
He stooped to grasp it, but as he drew,
Roland returned to his sense anew.

CXCI.

He saw the Saracen seize his sword;
His eyes he oped, and he spake one word—
"Thou art not one of our band, I trow,"
And he clutched the horn he would ne'er forego;
On the golden crest he smote him full,
Shattering steel and bone and skull,
Forth from his head his eyes he beat,
And cast him lifeless before his feet.
"Miscreant, makest thou then so free,
As, right or wrong, to lay hand on me?
Who hears it will deem thee a madman born;
Behold the mouth of mine ivory horn
Broken for thee, and the gems and gold
Around its rim to earth are rolled."

CXCII.

Roland feeleth his eyesight reft,
Yet he stands erect with what strength is left;

From his bloodless cheek is the hue dispelled,
But his Durindana all bare he held.
In front a dark brown rock arose—
He smote upon it ten grievous blows.
Grated the steel as it struck the flint,
Yet it brake not, nor bore its edge one dint.
"Mary, Mother, be thou mine aid!
Ah, Durindana, my ill-starred blade,
I may no longer thy guardian be!
What fields of battle I won with thee!
What realms and regions 'twas ours to gain,
Now the lordship of Carlemaine!
Never shalt thou possessor know
Who would turn from face of mortal foe;
A gallant vassal so long thee bore,
Such as France the free shall know no more."

CXCIII.

He smote anew on the marble stair.
It grated, but breach nor notch was there.
When Roland found that it would not break,
Thus began he his plaint to make.
"Ah, Durindana, how fair and bright
Thou sparklest, flaming against the light!
When Karl in Maurienne valley lay,
God sent his angel from heaven to say—

'This sword shall a valorous captain's be,'
And he girt it, the gentle king, on me.
With it I vanquished Poitou and Maine,
Provence I conquered, and Aquitaine;
I conquered Normandy the free,
Anjou, and the marches of Brittany;
Romagna I won, and Lombardy,
Bavaria, Flanders from side to side,
And Burgundy, and Poland wide;
Constantinople affiance vowed,
And the Saxon soil to his bidding bowed;
Scotia, and Wales, and Ireland's plain,*
Of England made he his own domain.
What mighty regions I won of old,
For the hoary-headed Karl to hold!
But there presses on me a grievous pain,
Lest thou in heathen hands remain.
O God our Father, keep France from stain!"

CXCIV.

His strokes once more on the brown rock fell,
And the steel was bent past words to tell;
Yet it brake not, nor was notched the grain,
Erect it leaped to the sky again.
When he failed at the last to break his blade,
His lamentation he inly made.

* See Note EE.

"Oh, fair and holy, my peerless sword,
What relics lie in thy pommel stored!
Tooth of Saint Peter, Saint Basil's blood,
Hair of Saint Denis beside them strewed,
Fragment of holy Mary's vest.
'Twere shame that thou with the heathen rest;
Thee should the hand of a Christian serve,
One who would never in battle swerve.
What regions won I with thee of yore,
The empire now of Karl the hoar!
Rich and mighty is he therefore."

CXCV.

That death was on him he knew full well;
Down from his head to his heart it fell.
On the grass beneath a pine-tree's shade,
With face to earth, his form he laid,
Beneath him placed he his horn and sword,
And turned his face to the heathen horde.
Thus hath he done the sooth to show,
That Karl and his warriors all may know,
That the gentle count a conqueror died.
Mea Culpa full oft he cried;
And, for all his sins, unto God above,
In sign of penance, he raised his glove.

CXCVI.

Roland feeleth his hour at hand;
On a knoll he lies towards the Spanish land.
With one hand beats he upon his breast:
"In thy sight, O God, be my sins confessed.
From my hour of birth, both the great and small,
Down to this day, I repent of all."
As his glove he raises to God on high,
Angels of heaven descend him nigh.

CXCVII.

Beneath a pine was his resting-place,
To the land of Spain hath he turned his face.
On his memory rose full many a thought—
Of the lands he won and the fields he fought;
Of his gentle France, of his kin and line;
Of his nursing father, King Karl benign;—
He may not the tear and sob control,
Nor yet forgets he his parting soul.
To God's compassion he makes his cry:
"O Father true, who canst not lie,
Who didst Lazarus raise unto life agen,
And Daniel shield in the lions' den;
Shield my soul from its peril, due
For the sins I sinned my lifetime through."

He did his right-hand glove uplift—
St. Gabriel took from his hand the gift;
Then drooped his head upon his breast,
And with claspèd hands he went to rest.
God from on high sent down to him
One of his angel Cherubim—
Saint Michael of Peril of the sea,
Saint Gabriel in company—
From heaven they came for that soul of price,
And they bore it with them to Paradise.*

* See Note FF.

PART III.

THE REPRISALS.

The Chastisement of the Saracens.

CXCVIII.

DEAD is Roland; his soul with God.
While to Roncesvalles the Emperor rode,
Where neither path nor track he found,
Nor open space nor rood of ground,
But was strewn with Frank or heathen slain,
"Where art thou, Roland?" he cried in pain:
"The Archbishop where, and Olivier,
Gerein and his brother in arms, Gerier?
Count Otho where, and Berengier,
Ivon and Ivor, so dear to me;
And Engelier of Gascony;
Samson the duke, and Anseis the bold;
Gerard, of Roussillon, the old;
My peers, the twelve, whom I left behind?"
In vain!—No answer may he find.
"O God," he cried, "what grief is mine
That I was not in front of this battle line!"

For very wrath his beard he tore,
His knights and barons weeping sore ;
Aswoon full fifty thousand fall ;
Duke Naimes hath pity and dole for all.

CXCIX.

Nor knight nor baron was there to see
But wept full fast, and bitterly ;
For son and brother their tears descend,
For lord and liege, for kin and friend ;
Aswoon all numberless they fell,
But Naimes did gallantly and well.
He spake the first to the Emperor—
"Look onward, sire, two leagues before,
See the dust from the ways arise,—
There the strength of the heathen lies.
Ride on ; avenge you for this dark day."
"O God," said Karl, "they are far away !
Yet for right and honour, the sooth ye say.
Fair France's flower they have torn from me."
To Otun and Gebouin beckoned he,
To Tybalt of Rheims, and Milo the count.
"Guard the battle-field, vale, and mount—
Leave the dead as ye see them lie ;
Watch, that nor lion nor beast come nigh,
Nor on them varlet or squire lay hand ;
None shall touch them, 'tis my command,

Till with God's good grace we return again."
They answered lowly, in loving strain,
"Great lord, fair sire, we will do your hest,"
And a thousand warriors with them rest.

CC.

The Emperor bade his clarions ring,
Marched with his host the noble king.
They came at last on the heathens' trace,
And all together pursued in chase;
But the King of the falling eve was ware:
He alighted down in a meadow fair,
Knelt on the earth unto God to pray
That He make the sun in his course delay,
Retard the night, and prolong the day.
Then his wonted angel who with him spake,
Swiftly to Karl did answer make,
"Ride on! Light shall not thee forego;
God seeth the flower of France laid low;
Thy vengeance wreak on the felon crew."
The Emperor sprang to his steed anew.

CCI.

God wrought for Karl a miracle:
In his place in heaven the sun stood still.
The heathens fled, the Franks pursued,
And in Val Tenèbres beside them stood;

Towards Saragossa the rout they drave,
And deadly were the strokes they gave.
They barred against them path and road;
In front the water of Ebro flowed:
Strong was the current, deep and large;
Was neither shallop, nor boat, nor barge.
With a cry to their idol Termagaunt,
The heathens plunge, but with scanty vaunt.
Encumbered with their armour's weight,
Sank the most to the bottom, straight;
Others floated adown the stream;
And the luckiest drank their fill, I deem:
All were in marvellous anguish drowned.
Cry the Franks, "In Roland your fate ye found."

CCII.

As he sees the doom of the heathen host,
Slain are some and drowned the most,
(Great spoil have won the Christian knights),
The gentle king from his steed alights,
And kneels, his thanks unto God to pour:
The sun had set as he rose once more.
"It is time to rest," the Emperor cried,
"And to Roncesvalles 'twere late to ride.
Our steeds are weary and spent with pain;
Strip them of saddle and bridle-rein,

Free let them browse on the verdant mead."
"Sire," say the Franks, "it were well, indeed."

CCIII.

The Emperor hath his quarters ta'en,
And the Franks alight in the vacant plain;
The saddles from their steeds they strip,
And the bridle-reins from their heads they slip;
They set them free on the green grass fair,
Nor can they render them other care.
On the ground the weary warriors slept;
Watch nor vigil that night they kept.

CCIV.

In the mead the Emperor made his bed,
With his mighty spear beside his head,
Nor will he doff his arms to-night,
But lies in his broidered hauberk white.
Laced is his helm, with gold inlaid,
Girt on Joyeuse, the peerless blade,
Which changes thirty times a day
The brightness of its varying ray.
Nor may the lance unspoken be
Which pierced our Saviour on the tree;
Karl hath its point—so God him graced—
Within his golden hilt enchased.

And for this honour and boon of heaven,
The name Joyeuse to the sword was given;
The Franks may hold it in memory.
Thence came "Montjoie," their battle-cry,
And thence no race with them may vie.

CCV.

Clear was the night, and the fair moon shone,
But grief weighed heavy King Karl upon;
He thought of Roland and Olivier,
Of his Franks and every gallant peer,
Whom he left to perish in Roncesvale,
Nor can he stint but to weep and wail,
Imploring God their souls to bless,—
Till, overcome with long distress,
He slumbers at last for heaviness.
The Franks are sleeping throughout the meads;
Nor rest on foot can the weary steeds—
They crop the herb as they stretch them prone.—
Much hath he learned who hath sorrow known.*

CCVI.

The emperor slumbered like man forespent,
While God his angel Gabriel sent
The couch of Carlemaine to guard.
All night the angel kept watch and ward,

* See Note GG.

And in a vision to Karl presaged
A coming battle against him waged.
'Twas shown in fearful augury;
The King looked upwards to the sky—
There saw he lightning, and hail, and storm,
Wind and tempest in fearful form.
A dread apparel of fire and flame,
Down at once on his host they came.
Their ashen lances the flames enfold,
And their bucklers in to the knobs of gold;
Grated the steel of helm and mail.
Yet other perils the Franks assail,
And his cavaliers are in deadly strait.
Bears and lions to rend them wait,
Wiverns, snakes and fiends of fire,
More than a thousand griffins dire;
Enfuried at the host they fly.
"Help us, Karl!" was the Franks' outcry,
Ruth and sorrow the king beset;
Fain would he aid, but was sternly let.
A lion came from the forest path,
Proud and daring, and fierce in wrath;
Forward sprang he the king to grasp,
And each seized other with deadly clasp;
But who shall conquer or who shall fall,
None knoweth. Nor woke the king withal.

CCVII.

Another vision came him o'er :
He was in France, his land, once more ;
In Aix, upon his palace stair,
And held in double chain a bear.
When thirty more from Arden ran,
Each spake with voice of living man :
" Release him, sire ! " aloud they call ;
" Our kinsman shall not rest in thrall.
To succour him our arms are bound."
Then from the palace leaped a hound,
On the mightiest of the bears he pressed,
Upon the sward, before the rest.
The wondrous fight King Karl may see,
But knows not who shall victor be.
These did the angel to Karl display ;
But the Emperor slept till dawning day.

CCVIII.

At morning-tide when day-dawn broke,
The Emperor from his slumber woke.
His holy guardian, Gabriel,
With hand uplifted sained him well.
The king aside his armour laid,
And his warriors all were disarrayed.

Then mount they, and in haste they ride,
Through lengthening path and highway wide
Until they see the doleful sight
In Roncesvalles, the field of fight.

CCIX.

Unto Roncesvalles King Karl hath sped,
And his tears are falling above the dead;
"Ride, my barons, at gentle pace,—
I will go before, a little space,
For my nephew's sake, whom I fain would find.
It was once in Aix, I recall to mind,
When we met at the yearly festal-tide,—
My cavaliers in vaunting vied
Of stricken fields and joustings proud,—
I heard my Roland declare aloud,
In foreign land would he never fall
But in front of his peers and his warriors all,
He would lie with head to the foeman's shore,
And make his end like a conqueror."
Then far as man a staff might fling,
Clomb to a rising knoll the king.

CCX.

As the king in quest of Roland speeds,
The flowers and grass throughout the meads

He sees all red with our barons' blood,
And his tears of pity break forth in flood.
He upward climbs, till, beneath two trees,
The dints upon the rock he sees.
Of Roland's corse he was then aware;
Stretched it lay on the green grass bare.
No marvel sorrow the king oppressed;
He alighted down, and in haste he pressed,
Took the body his arms between,
And fainted: dire his grief I ween.

CCXI.

As did reviving sense begin,
Naimes, the duke, and Count Acelin,
The noble Geoffrey of Anjou,
And his brother Henry nigh him drew.
They made a pine-tree's trunk his stay;
But he looked to earth where his nephew lay,
And thus all gently made his dole:
"My friend, my Roland, God guard thy soul!
Never on earth such knight hath been,
Fields of battle to fight and win.
My pride and glory, alas, are gone!"
He endured no longer: he swooned anon.

CCXII.

As Karl the king revived once more,
His hands were held by barons four.
He saw his nephew, cold and wan;
Stark his frame, but his hue was gone;
His eyes turned inward, dark and dim;
And Karl in love lamented him:
"Dear Roland, God thy spirit rest
In Paradise, amongst His blest!
In evil hour thou soughtest Spain:
No day shall dawn but sees my pain,
And me of strength and pride bereft,
No champion of mine honour left;
Without a friend beneath the sky;
And though my kindred still be nigh,
Is none like thee their ranks among."
With both his hands his beard he wrung.
The Franks bewailed in unison;
A hundred thousand wept like one.

CCXIII.

"Dear Roland, I return again
To Laon, to mine own domain;
Where men will come from many a land,
And seek Count Roland at my hand.
A bitter tale must I unfold—
'In Spanish earth he lieth cold.'

A joyless realm henceforth I hold,
And weep with daily tears untold.

CCXIV.

"Dear Roland, beautiful and brave,
All men of me will tidings crave,
When I return to La Chapelle.
Oh, what a tale is mine to tell!
That low my glorious nephew lies.
Now will the Saxon foeman rise;
Bulgar and Hun in arms will come,
Apulia's power, the might of Rome,
Palermitan and Afric bands,
And men from fierce and distant lands.
To sorrow sorrow must succeed;
My hosts to battle who shall lead,
When the mighty captain is overthrown?
Ah! France deserted now, and lone.
Come, death, before such grief I bear."
Once more his beard and hoary hair
Began he with his hands to tear;
A hundred thousand fainted there.

CCXV.

"Dear Roland, and was this thy fate?
May Paradise thy soul await.

Who slew thee wrought fair France's bane:
I cannot live, so deep my pain.
For me my kindred lie undone;
And would to Holy Mary's Son,
Ere I at Cizra's gorge alight,
My soul may take its parting flight:
My spirit would with theirs abide;
My body rest their dust beside."
With sobs, his hoary beard he tore.
"Alas!" said Naimes, "for the Emperor."

CCXVI.

'Sir Emperor," Geoffrey of Anjou said,
"Be not by sorrow so sore misled.
Let us seek our comrades throughout the plain,
Who fell by the hands of the men of Spain;
And let their bodies on biers be borne."
"Yea," said the Emperor. "Sound your horn."

CCXVII.

Now doth Count Geoffrey his bugle sound,
And the Franks from their steeds alight to ground.
As they their dead companions find,
They lay them low on biers reclined;
Nor prayers of bishop or abbot ceased,
Of monk or canon, or tonsured priest.

The dead they blessed in God's great name,
Set myrrh and frankincense aflame.
Their incense to the dead they gave,
Then laid them, as beseemed the brave—
What could they more?—in honoured grave.

CCXVIII.

But the king kept watch o'er Roland's bier,
O'er Turpin and Sir Olivier.
He bade their bodies opened be,
Took the hearts of the barons three,
Swathed them in silken cerements light,
Laid them in urns of the marble white.
Their bodies did the Franks enfold
In skins of deer, around them rolled;
Laved them with spices and with wine,
Till the king to Milo gave his sign,
To Tybalt, Otun, and Gebouin;
Their bodies three on biers they set,
Each in its silken coverlet.

* * * * *

CCXIX.

To Saragossa did Marsil flee.
He alighted beneath an olive tree,
And sadly to his serfs he gave
His helm, his cuirass, and his glaive,

Then flung him on the herbage green;
Came nigh him Bramimonde his queen.
Shorn from the wrist was his right hand good;
He swooned for pain and waste of blood.
The queen, in anguish, wept and cried,
With twenty thousand by her side.
King Karl and gentle France they cursed;
Then on their gods their anger burst.
Unto Apollin's crypt they ran,
And with revilings thus began:
"Ah, evil-hearted god, to bring
Such dark dishonour on our king.
Thy servants ill dost thou repay."
His crown and wand they wrench away,
They bind him to a pillar fast,
And then his form to earth they cast,
His limbs with staves they bruise and break:
From Termagaunt his gem they take:
Mohammed to a trench they bear,
For dogs and boars to tread and tear.

CCXX.

Within his vaulted hall they bore
King Marsil, when his swoon was o'er;
The hall with coloured writings stained.
And loud the queen in anguish plained,

The while she tore her streaming hair,
"Ah, Saragossa, reft and bare,
Thou seest thy noble king o'erthrown!
Such felony our gods have shown,
Who failed in fight his aids to be.
The Emir comes—a dastard he,
Unless he will that race essay,
Who proudly fling their lives away.
Their Emperor of the hoary beard,
In valour's desperation reared,
Will never fly for mortal foe.
Till he be slain, how deep my woe!" *

* * * * *

CCXXI.

Fierce is the heat and thick the dust.
The Franks the flying Arabs thrust.
To Saragossa speeds their flight.
The queen ascends a turret's height.
The clerks and canons on her wait,
Of that false law God holds in hate.

* Here intervenes the episode of the great battle fought between Charlemagne and Baligant, Emir of Babylon, who had come, with a mighty army, to the succour of King Marsil his vassal. As to this, see introduction. The translation is resumed at the end of the battle, after the Emir had been slain by Charlemagne's own hand, and when the Franks enter Saragossa in pursuit of the Saracens.

Order or tonsure have they none.
And when she thus beheld undone
The Arab power, all disarrayed,
Aloud she cried, "Mahound us aid!
My king! defeated is our race,
The Emir slain in foul disgrace."
King Marsil turns him to the wall,
And weeps—his visage darkened all.
He dies for grief—in sin he dies,
His wretched soul the demon's prize.

CCXXII.

Dead lay the heathens, or turned to flight,
And Karl was victor in the fight.
Down Saragossa's wall he brake—
Defence he knew was none to make.
And as the city lay subdued,
The hoary king all proudly stood,
There rested his victorious powers.
The queen hath yielded up the towers—
Ten great towers and fifty small.
Well strives he whom God aids withal.

CCXXIII.

Day passed; the shades of night drew on,
And moon and stars refulgent shone.

Now Karl is Saragossa's lord,
And a thousand Franks, by the king's award,
Roam the city, to search and see
Where mosque or synagogue may be.
With axe and mallet of steel in hand,
They let nor idol nor image stand,
The shrines of sorcery down they hew;
For Karl hath faith in God the True,
And will Him righteous service do.
The bishops have the water blessed,
The heathens to the font are pressed.
If any Karl's command gainsay,
He has him hanged or burned straightway.
So a hundred thousand to Christ are won;
But Bramimonde the queen alone
Shall unto France be captive brought,
And in love be her conversion wrought.

CCXXIV.

Night passed, and came the daylight hours,
Karl garrisoned the city's towers;
He left a thousand valiant knights,
To sentinel their Emperor's rights.
Then all his Franks ascend their steeds,
While Bramimonde in bonds he leads,
To work her good his sole intent.
And so, in pride and strength, they went;

They passed Narbonne in gallant show,
And reached thy stately walls, Bordeaux.
There, on Saint Severin's altar high,
Karl placed Count Roland's horn to lie,
With mangons filled, and coins of gold,
As pilgrims to this hour behold.
Across Garonne he bent his way,
In ships within the stream that lay,
And brought his nephew unto Blaye,
With his noble comrade, Olivier,
And Turpin sage, the gallant peer.
Of the marble white their tombs were made;
In Saint Roman's shrine are the barons laid,
Whom the Franks to God and his saints commend.
And Karl by hill and vale doth wend,
Nor stays till Aix is reached, and there
Alighteth on his marble stair.
When sits he in his palace hall,
He sends around to his judges all,
From Frisia, Saxony, Lorraine,
From Burgundy and Allemaine,
From Normandy, Brittaine, Poitou:
The realm of France he searcheth through,
And summons every sagest man.
The plea of Ganelon then began.

CCXXV.

From Spain the Emperor made retreat,
To Aix in France, his kingly seat;
And thither, to his halls, there came,
Alda, the fair and gentle dame.
"Where is my Roland, sire," she cried,
"Who vowed to take me for his bride?"
O'er Karl the flood of sorrow swept;
He tore his beard, and loud he wept.
"Dear sister, gentle friend," he said,
"Thou seekest one who lieth dead:
I plight to thee my son instead,—
Louis, who lord of my realm shall be."
"Strange," she said, "seems this to me.
God and his angels forbid that I
Should live on earth if Roland die."
Pale grew her cheek—she sank amain,
Down at the feet of Carlemaine.
So died she. God receive her soul!
The Franks bewail her in grief and dole.

CCXXVI.

So to her death went Alda fair.
The king but deemed she fainted there.
While dropped his tears of pity warm,
He took her hands and raised her form.

Upon his shoulder drooped her head,
And Karl was ware that she was dead.
When thus he saw that life was o'er,
He summoned noble ladies four.
Within a cloister was she borne;
They watched beside her until morn;
Beneath a shrine her limbs were laid;—
Such honour Karl to Alda paid.

CCXXVII.

The Emperor sitteth in Aix again,
While Gan the felon, in iron chain,
The very palace walls beside,
By serfs unto a stake was tied.
They bound his hands with leathern thong,
Beat him with staves and cordage strong;
Nor hath he earned a better fee.
And there in pain awaits his plea.

CCXXVIII.

'Tis written in the ancient geste,
How Karl hath summoned east and west.
At La Chapelle assembled they;
High was the feast and great the day—
Saint Sylvester's, the legend ran.
The plea and judgment then began

Of Ganelon, who the treason wrought,
Now face to face with his Emperor brought.

CCXXIX.

"Lords, my barons," said Karl the king,
"On Gan be righteous reckoning:
He followed in my host to Spain;
Through him ten thousand Franks lie slain;
And slain was he, my sister's son,
Whom never more ye look upon,
With Olivier the sage and bold,
And all my peers, betrayed for gold."
"Shame befall me," said Gan, "if I
Now or ever the deed deny;
Foully he wronged me in wealth and land,
And I his death and ruin planned:
Therein, I say, was treason none."
They said, "We will advise thereon."

CCXXX.

Count Gan to the Emperor's presence came,
Fresh of hue and lithe of frame,
With a baron's mien, were his heart but true.
On his judges round his glance he threw,
And on thirty kinsmen by his side,
And thus, with mighty voice, he cried:

"Hear me, barons, for love of God.
In the Emperor's host was I abroad—
Well I served him, and loyally,
But his nephew, Roland, hated me:
He doomed my doom of death and woe,
That I to Marsil's court should go.
My craft the danger put aside,
But Roland loudly I defied,
With Olivier, and all their crew,
As Karl, and these his barons, knew.
Vengeance, not treason, have I wrought."
"Thereon," they answered, "take we thought."

CCXXXI.

When Ganelon saw the plea begin,
He mustered thirty of his kin,
With one revered by all the rest—
Pinabel of Sorrence's crest.
Well can his tongue his cause unfold,
And a vassal brave his arms to hold.
"Thine aid," said Ganelon, "I claim:
To rescue me from death and shame."
Said Pinabel, "Rescued shalt thou be.
Let any Frank thy death decree,
And, wheresoe'er the king deems meet,
I will him body to body greet,

Give him the lie with my brand of steel."
Ganelon sank at his feet to kneel.

CCXXXII.

Come Frank and Norman to council in,
Bavarian, Saxon, and Poitevin,
With all the barons of Teuton blood;
But the men of Auvergne are mild of mood—
Their hearts are swayed unto Pinabel.
Saith each to other, "Pause we well.
Let us leave this plea, and the king implore
To set Count Ganelon free once more,
Henceforth to serve him in love and faith:
Count Roland lieth cold in death:
Not all the gold beneath the sky
Can give him back to mortal eye;
Such battle would but madness be."
They all applauded this decree,
Save Thierry—Geoffrey's brother he.

CCXXXIII.

The barons came the king before.
"Fair Sire, we all thy grace implore,
That Gan be suffered free to go,
His faith and love henceforth to show.
Oh, let him live—a noble he..
Your Roland you shall never see:

No wealth of gold may him recall."
Karl answered, "Ye are felons all."

CCXXXIV.

When Karl saw all forsake him now,
Dark grew his face and drooped his brow.
He said, "Of men most wretched I!"
Stepped forth Thierry speedily,
Duke Geoffrey's brother, a noble knight,
Spare of body, and lithe and light,
Dark his hair and his hue withal,
Nor low of stature, nor over tall.
To Karl, in courteous wise, he said,
"Fair Sire, be not disheartenèd.
I have served you truly, and, in the name
Of my lineage, I this quarrel claim.
If Roland wronged Sir Gan in aught,
Your service had his safeguard wrought.
Ganelon bore him like caitiff base,
A perjured traitor before your face.
I adjudge him to die on the gallows tree;
Flung to the hounds let his carcase be,
The doom of treason and felony.
Let kin of his but say I lie,
And with this girded sword will I
My plighted word in fight maintain."
"Well spoken," cry the Franks amain.

CCXXXV.

Sir Pinabel stood before Karl in place,
Vast of body and swift of pace,—
Small hope hath he whom his sword may smite.
"Sire, it is yours to decide the right.
Bid this clamour around to pause.
Thierry hath dared to adjudge the cause.
He lieth. Battle thereon I do."
And forth his right-hand glove he drew.
But the Emperor said, "In bail to me
Shall thirty of his kinsmen be;
I yield him pledges on my side:
Be they guarded well till the right be tried."
When Thierry saw the fight shall be,
To Karl his right glove reacheth he;
The Emperor gave his pledges o'er.
And set in place were benches four—
Thereon the champions take their seat,
And all is ranged in order meet,—
The preparations Ogier speeds,—
And both demand their arms and steeds.

CCXXXVI.

But yet, ere lay they lance in rest,
They make their shrift, are sained and blessed;

They hear the Mass, the Host receive,
Great gifts to church and cloister leave.
They stand before the Emperor's face;
The spurs upon their feet they lace;
Gird on their corselets, strong and light;
Close on their heads the helmets bright.
The golden hilts at belt are hung;
Their quartered shields from shoulder swung.
In hand the mighty spears they lift,
Then spring they on their chargers swift.
A hundred thousand cavaliers
The while for Thierry drop their tears;
They pity him for Roland's sake.
God knows what end the strife shall take.

CCXXXVII.

At Aix is a wide and grassy plain,
Where meet in battle the barons twain.
Both of valorous knighthood are,
Their chargers swift and apt for war.
They prick them hard, with slackened rein;
Drive each at other with might and main.
Their bucklers are in fragments flung,
Their hauberks rent, their girths unstrung;
With saddles turned, they earthward rolled.
A hundred thousand in tears behold.

CCXXXVIII.

Both cavaliers to earth are gone,
Both rise and leap on foot anon.
Strong is Pinabel, swift and light;
Each striketh other, unhorsed they fight;
With golden hilted swords, they deal
Fiery strokes on the helms of steel.
Trenchant and fierce is their every blow.
The Franks look on in wondrous woe.
"O God," saith Karl, "Thy judgment show."

CCXXXIX.

"Yield thee, Thierry," said Pinabel.
"In love and faith will I serve thee well,
And all my wealth to thy feet will bring,
Win Ganelon's pardon from the king."
"Never," Thierry in scorn replied,
"Shall thought so base in my bosom bide!
God betwixt us this day decide.

CCXL.

"Ah, Pinabel!" so Thierry spake,
"Thou art a baron of stalwart make,
Thy knighthood known to every peer,—
Come, let us cease this battle here.

With Karl thy concord shall be won,
But on Ganelon be justice done;
Of him henceforth let speech be none."
"No," said Pinabel; "God forefend!
My kinsman I to the last defend;
Nor will I blench for mortal face,—
Far better death than such disgrace."
Began they with their glaives anew
The gold-encrusted helms to hew;
Towards heaven the fiery sparkles flew.
They shall not be disjoined again,
Nor end the strife till one be slain.

CCXLI.

Pinabel, lord of Sorrence's keep,
Smote Thierry's helm with stroke so deep,
The very fire that from it came
Hath set the prairie round in flame;
The edge of steel did his forehead trace
Unto the middle, adown his face;
His hauberk to the centre clave.
God deigned Thierry from death to save.

CCXLII.

When Thierry felt him wounded so,
For his bright blood flowed on the grass below,

He smote on Pinabel's helmet brown,
Cut and clave to the nasal down;
Dashed his brains from forth his head,
And, with stroke of prowess, cast him dead.
Thus, at a blow, was the battle won:
"God," say the Franks, "hath this marvel done."

CCXLIII.

When Thierry thus was the conqueror,
He came the Emperor Karl before.
Full fifty barons were in his train,
Duke Naimes, and Ogier the noble Dane,
Geoffrey of Anjou and William of Blaye.
Karl clasped him in his arms straightway.
With the skin of sable he wiped his face;
Then cast it from him, and, in its place,
Bade him in fresh attire be drest.
His armour gently the knights divest;
On an Arab mule they make him ride:
So returns he, in joy and pride.
To the open plain of Aix they come,
Where the kin of Ganelon wait their doom.

CCXLIV.

Karl his dukes and his counts addressed:
"Say, what of those who in bondage rest—
Who came Count Ganelon's plea to aid,
And for Pinabel were bailsmen made?"

"One and all let them die the death."
And the king to Basbrun, his provost, saith,
"Go, hang them all on the gallows tree.
By my beard I swear, so white to see,
If one escape, thou shalt surely die."
"Mine be the task," he made reply.
A hundred men-at-arms are there;
The thirty to their doom they bear.
The traitor shall his guilt atone,
With blood of others and his own.

CCXLV.

The men of Bavaria and Allemaine,
Norman and Breton return again,
And with all the Franks aloud they cry,
That Gan a traitor's death shall die.
They bade be brought four stallions fleet;
Bound to them Ganelon, hands and feet;
Wild and swift was each savage steed,
And a mare was standing within the mead;
Four grooms impelled the coursers on,—
A fearful ending for Ganelon.
His every nerve was stretched and torn,
And the limbs of his body apart were borne;
The bright blood, springing from every vein,
Left on the herbage green its stain.

He died a felon and recreant:
Never shall traitor his treason vaunt.

CCXLVI.

Now was the Emperor's vengeance done,
And he called to the bishops of France anon,
With those of Bavaria and Allemaine.
"A noble captive is in my train.
She hath hearkened to sermon and homily,
And a true believer in Christ will be;
Baptize her so that her soul have grace."
They said, "Let ladies of noble race,
At her christening, be her sponsors vowed."
And so there gathered a mighty crowd.
At the baths of Aix was the wondrous scene—
There baptized they the Spanish queen;
Julienne they have named her name.
In faith and truth unto Christ she came.

CCXLVII.

When the Emperor's justice was satisfied,
His mighty wrath did awhile subside.
Queen Bramimonde was a Christian made.
The day passed on into night's dark shade;
As the King in his vaulted chamber lay,
Saint Gabriel came from God to say,

"Karl, thou shalt summon thine empire's host,
And march in haste to Bira's coast;
Unto Impha city relief to bring,
And succour Vivian, the Christian king.
The heathens in siege have the town essayed,
And the shattered Christians invoke thine aid."
Fain would Karl such task decline.
"God! what a life of toil is mine!"
He wept; his hoary beard he wrung.

So ends the lay Turoldus sung.

NOTES.

NOTES

A.

STANZA I.

I have adopted the spelling of the Venetian MS., "Carlemaine," as more suited to poetry than "Carlemagne," the spelling of the Bodleian MS.

B.

"Hath been for seven full years in Spain."

These Spanish conquests of Charlemagne are, as the reader will have seen by the introduction, entirely mythical. No wonder that when they became embodied in a work so widely read and religiously confided in as the pseudo-Turpin, the national feelings of the Spanish were awakened. I append here a valuable note, with which a learned French ecclesiastic has kindly furnished me, on the relation of the Carlovingian legend to Spanish history and poetry.

CHARLEMAGNE ET ROLAND DANS L'HISTOIRE ET LA POESIE ESPAGNOLE.

I. HISTOIRE.

1. Les plus anciennes chroniques Arturo-latines du IX^e^ et du X^e^ siècle gardent le plus profond silence sur l'expédition de Charlemagne dans le Nord-Ouest de l'Espagne, sur la défaite dans les Pyrénées, et sur la mort de Roland. C'est ce qu'il est

facile de constater en parcourant la Chronique d'Albada ou de S. Millan (écrite à 882), celle de Sébastien ou plus tôt d'Alphonse III. (écrite vers la même époque) et les chartes authentiques d'Oviedo.*

2. Les Chroniques de Léon ou de Castille du XII^e^ et du XIII^e^ siècle, le moine de Silos, Rodrique de Tolède, Luc de Tuy, parlent de Charlemagne et de Roland pour mentionner la défaite de l'un, la mort de l'autre, et pour réfuter les vanteries françaises du faux Turpin et de la Chronique de Roland.

Ainsi le Moine de Silos déclare carrément que les Espagnols, ne doivent rien à Charlemagne ; qu'entré en Navarre et après avoir pris pacifiquement possession de Pampelune, à peine s'avança jusqu'à Saragosse, dont il s'éloigna, gagné par l'or des Sarrasins et rappellé en France par son amour des bains et du luxe ; qu'après avoir fait démanteler Pampelune, il eut son arrière garde, commandée par Egibard et Roland, massacrée dans les gorges de Pyrénées, et qu'il ne vengea jamais cette injure (Monache Silensòs, *chron.* c. ii. 12, 19, et 20) † Le Moine de Silos écrit tout ceci en opposition à ce que les *français affirment faussement* (*Franci falso asserunt*).

Rodrique de Tolède mêle à ce récit de la défaite de Charlemagne et de la mort de Roland le personage légendaire de Bernal del Carpio, et une protestation contre les mensongères conquêtes de Charlemagne en Espagne.‡

Luc de Tuy brouille tout ; il place la défaite de Charlemagne et la mort de Roland à Roncevaux par Alphonse-le-Chaste et Bernal del Carpio (*chronico.* mundi, dans Schott, *Hisp. Illustr.* t. iv. p. 75); puis une seconde défaite des Francs d'un Empereur Charles III. par Alphonse le Grand et Bernal del Carpio cent ans après la précédente (*ibid.* p. 79). Bien entendu que l'un et l'autre Charles font ensuite le pélérinage de S. Jacques de Compostelle.

* Les chroniques de S. Millan et d'Alphonse III., ainsi que les chartes authentiques d'Oviedo sont renfermées dans les appendices au 2^e^ vol. de *Beganza Antiguedades de España Propugnadas*, etc., 2 in f° Madrid, 1721 ; dans le tome xiii. de *l'Espana Sagrada*, par Florez, et dans le tome xxxvii. du même ouvrage.

† Berganza, t. ii. p. 516, et. *Esp. Sagr.* t. xvii. p. 271, n. 18, 19.

‡ Rodericus Toletanus, *De Reb. Hisp.* l. iv. c. 10.

II. Poésie.

Aucun des poëtes Espagnols du Moyen âge n'a, que je sache, parlé de Roland. L'auteur anonyme de la *Legenda del Conde Fernan Gonzalez*, qui composait a poëme dans la seconde moitié du XIII^e^ siècle, n'en dit mot, quoiqu'il parle de la guerre entre Charlemagne et Alphonse-le-Chaste, et de la double victoire remportée par Bernard del Carpio, Géneral du Roi des Asturies, sur les Français avec le Concours des Sarrasins (*Poema, vel Legenda de Fernan Gonzales*, copt. 127–144).

Pour trouver quelque chose qui ressemble à la légende de Roland à Roncevaux dans la poésie Espagnole il faut, je crois, descendre aux *Romances Caballerescos* du XVI^e^ siècle, et aux Dramaturges espagnols du XVII.^e^

Un dernier mot sur la légende de Bernal del Carpio. C'est la réponse populaire de l'Espagne chrétienne, aux hâbleries françaises sur Roland et Charlemagne.

La forme la plus ancienne de cette légende est reproduite dans le poëme de Fernand Gonzalez. Il n'est question là ni de la sœur d'Alphonse-le-Chaste, ni de son mariage secret avec le Cte. Don Sanche, d'où serait issu Bernard del Carpio, et par conséquent d'aucun lien de parenté entre Bernard et Alphonse-le-Chaste.

Alphonse-el-Sabio, dans son histoire d'Espagne et les Romances, nous donnent la version la plus récente de cette légende.

J. Tailhan, S.J.

Supplément à la note sur Roland en Espagne.

1. Quelques écrivains Français ont pretendu que la Chronique de Turpin aurait été composée par un chanoine de Compostelle, qui espérait ainsi achalander le pèlerinage de St. Jacques. Mais outre qu'un Espagnol de Compostelle ou d'ailleurs, se serait difficilement résigné au XII^e^ siècle—époque approximative de

la composition de cette chronique—à forger sur le dos de ses compatriotes, une gloire apocryphe au profit de Charlemagne et de ses Français, le style de cette chronique n'a rien qui rappelle même de *latin* des écrivains espagnols de la même époque ; il serait en outre bien étonnant que les idiotismes esp. *vel*=et, *apellitune*, *fonsatura*, *fonsedera*, ne se montrent pas une seule fois dans le cours de cette compilation ; enfin l'*Histoiria Compostellana*, composée au commencement du XII^e^ siècle, dans son récit de la découverte du corps de S. Jacques sous Alphonse-le-Chaste, et dans l'Histoire des évêques qui gouvernèrent le siége Apostolique de Galice depuis cette découverte jusqu'à Diego Gelmirez qui fit écrire par un de ses clercs l'*Hist. Compostellana*, il n'est pas dit un mot des fables entassées dans son récit par le faux Turpin (v. le texte de cette *Historia Comp.* dans le tome xx^e^ de l'*Espana Sagrada*) ; Charlemagne n'y est même pas nommé. Et cependant un des deux compilateurs de l'œuvre l'*Archidiacre Don Hugo* était français de nation (cf. Florez, *Esp. Sagr.* t. xx. noticia previa, n. 4).

Je dois citer cependant, comme parlant d'un voyage de Charlemagne dans les Asturies (mais non à Saint Jacques) le *Chronicon. Trienne*, qui dans les MSS. suit l'*Historia Compostellana*. Mais tout se borne à une simple mention du fait sans aucun détail (cf. *Esp. Sagr.* t. xx. p. 602, n. 4).

Dans les actes apocryphes (quoiqu'en dise le docte Risco) du Concile d'Oviedo intercalés dans la chronique latine d'Astorga, il est parlé non d'un voyage de Charlemagne aux Asturies ; mais de l'envoi à Oviedo par ce prince, de Théodulphe, évêque d'Orleans, en qualité d'Ambassadeur (cf. *Esp. Sagr.* t. xxxvii. p. 295, 298, n. 6).

JULES TAILHAN, S.J., 1879.

C.

"He prays to Apollin." *Apollin.*

I would have gladly translated this word by "Apollyon." But the critics and editors are almost unanimous in asserting

that it was Apollo, the sun-god, whom the Christians accused the Saracens of adoring. The only authority I can find on the other side is Dr. Hertz, the German translator, who says in a note, "Apollin ist der biblishe Apollyon der Verderber." I have followed his example in giving simply the word as it is in the original. The common error of the Christians of that age, in representing those whom Gibbon terms "the purest monotheists" as worshippers of false Gods and graven images, is familiar to every one.

D.

Stanza II.

"Stair of marble." In the original "perrun."

Perron in modern French is commonly the flight of steps leading to the entrance of a public building or private mansion. The *perrun* in King Marsil's "verger" (*viridarium*) we may imagine as a marble block, with steps hewn in the centre, upon the uppermost of which he sate, as on a throne. Some such I lately read of as existing at the Bala Hissar in Cabul.

E.

"Dukes and Counts."

It is said that the Spanish Moors did, in fact, establish a kind of imitation of the feudal organization. But to attribute any knowledge of this to the poet would be to assume a great deal. In fact, the writers, as well as the painters of the Middle Ages, drew their pictures of the distant, or the past, from what they saw around them. Witness Chaucer's "Palamon and Arcite," where all the ordinances and romantic usages of chivalry are represented as in full vigour in the kingdoms of Thrace and India.

F.

"Gentle France." "*France dulce.*"

This is one of the "Homeric" epithets applied to France by Christian and heathen alike. Another designation of the France of Charlemagne is "tere majur—the great land."

G.

STANZA V.

"Cordres."

Many of the editors have insisted that Cordres is Cordova; that the poet, in absolute ignorance of the geography of Spain, had simply retained in his memory the names of the chief Spanish cities, and used them without reference to locality. There is no necessity, however, to shock so far the sense of probability in the mind of the reader. Cordres seems to have been an actual town in the Pyrenees.

H.

STANZA VII.

"Sicily."

The Oxford MS. has *Suatilie*. The Venetian, on the other hand, has *Cecilie*. M. Gautier, whom I follow, has adopted the latter reading.

I.

STANZA VIII.

"Or else was slain."

The same summary method of conversion was afterwards adopted, as the reader will find, on the capture of Saragossa. Though absolutely contrary to the doctrine of the Church and the decrees of councils, it naturally pleased the military and bardic imagination, as "vigour" at all times does. It must, however, be owned that Charlemagne's conversion of the Saxons was brought about very much in this fashion.

J.

Stanza XII.

"His barons."

His barons are his men. Baron—"*Ber*," in the nominative singular—is synonymous with "*vir*." In this sense it is familiar to every lawyer. In the poem it is used sometimes, as here, to signify the king's lieges who took part in his council; sometimes as a personal epithet, to denote greatness of character, to give "assurance of a man." The Archbishop and Charlemagne himself are constantly spoken of with the addition of "*li-ber*." It is even bestowed upon Saint Giles.

K.

Stanza XIV.

"Count Roland."

Li quens is the form of the nominative singular. In the oblique cases it becomes *Cunte*. Almost all the great vassals bore the title of Count. Two or three only were Dukes. In a few places the name of Marquis is given to Roland. This is plainly connected with the fact of the historical Roland having been Lord of the Marches of Brittany.

L.

"Valtierra," etc.

Of these places, Valtierra, Tudela, and Balaguet are easily identified. The others are unascertained or imaginary. It has been contended that Sebilie is Seville, but that is inadmissible. See note to Stanza V.

M.

Stanza XV.

"Hands clasped in yours."

It is hardly necessary to recall to the recollection of the reader the feudal ceremony of homage.

N.

STANZA XVI.

"White of hair and hoary of beard."

This line is not in the Bodleian MS. It is found in that of St. Mark. *Bláça oit la barba et li cero tut canu.* Naimes was Duke of Bavaria, bound to Charlemagne by the closest ties of affection and allegiance. He plays a great part in all the Carlovingian legends.

O.

STANZA XXIII.

"Baldwin."

Baldwin, son of Ganelon by Bertha; consequently, half brother to Roland. He is mentioned here, and in Stanza XXVIII., but then disappears totally from the poem. In the later *chansons de geste*, followed by Pulci, Baldwin is with Charlemagne's army, and is made to redeem his father's treason by dying gallantly at Roland's side in Roncesvalles.

P.

STANZA XXIX.

"Ad oes Seint Piere en cunquest le chevage."

The tribute of Peter's pence was in fact established in England in the time of Charlemagne, by Offa, king of the Mercians. It need scarcely be added that Charlemagne had no part in it, or that he never set foot in England. This and other references to England in the poem, confirm M. Gautier in his opinion that the author was one who came over in the train of William.

Q.

STANZA XXXIV.

"His javelin." In the original "Algier."

M. Gautier derives this word from the Saxon "Ategar," and relies on it as an additional proof of the Anglo-Norman origin of the poem. But surely the "Al" denotes an Arabic origin.

R.

STANZA XXXVI.

"The Algalif." In the original "l'Algalifes."

"Al" is, of course, the Arabic definite article "the," to which an additional article is prefixed, as in the familiar instance "the Alcoran." In the modern French versions this is commonly translated "le Calife;" but as the name "Caliph" is usually appropriated to the Vicar of the Prophet, I have thought it less misleading to adopt the very term as we find it in the poem.

S.

STANZA XLII.

"The heathen said 'I marvel sore.'"

The repetition in this and the following stanza will strike the reader. It has been disputed whether this is a case of simple *variantes*, or whether they all existed in the original and sprang from a design of the poet to heighten the effect. I have little doubt that the latter is the true solution. The effect is in truth heightened. The same repetition occurs in the passage where Olivier implores Roland to mind his horn. It should be mentioned that in the original there is always in these repetitions a variation of the assonant, and there was probably a marked change of intonation in the delivery.

T.

STANZA XLV.

"Cizra's Pass." In the "Kaiser Kronik" "Porta Cæsaris."

It still bears the name of Ciza. Every traveller in the Pyrenees is familiar with the name "porte" or "gate" as applied to one of the passes between France and Spain.

U.

STANZA LIV.

"Gailne city."

This city also remains among the unidentified. No probable conjecture has been made respecting it.

V.

STANZA LXI.

This stanza is not in the Venetian MS., and, to say the truth, Roland's anger seems inconsistent with the gallant spirit of knighthood evinced by him at first. But as it is in the Oxford MS., it could not, of course, be omitted.

W.

STANZA LXV.

The arming of Roland.

I subjoin an extract from the Old English version containing the corresponding passage.

Rowland was war of ther Croyll dede.
He commandèd Barons by his side,
He armêd him surly in irne wed
And thought him sure for eny ned :
His banners beten with gold for the nonys,
Set with diamonds and other stonys ;
His kneys coveryd with plats many,
His thies thringid with sich as I sey,
His acton and other ger that he werrid.
The swerd was ful good that he there had;
The hilt then he taketh surly and sad
When that his helm on his hed wer,
And his gloves gletering with gold wer,
Durendall his swerd gird hym about
With a schyning sheld, on his shulder stout,
He tok with hym his sper and went to hors
But lep on lightly without any boss.

"Durindana."

Durendal, Durendarte,—the famous sword of Roland. In the old English version, "Durendall." I have given the Italian form, "Durindana," as that most familiar to us.

X.

STANZA LXXVI.

"Almasour."

In the original "Almacur." The Arabic, "Al Mansor,—the victorious." It was a title given to high officials. In the pseudo-Turpin it is rendered "*Altumajor*"—"Altumajor Cordubæ."

Z.

STANZA XCV.

"Montjoie."

In the original "Munjoie." A volume might be made up of the various theories as to the origin of this famous war-cry of the Franks, afterwards coupled with the name of their patron, St. Denis. Was it simply *Meum Gaudium*, or was it *Mons Gaudii?* "Adhuc sub judice lis est." The poet makes it come from Charlemagne's sword, "Joyeuse." See Stanza CCIV.

AA.

STANZA CXIII.

This and the following stanzas are not in the Oxford MS. They are inserted by M. Gautier from the later versions. As Count Walter's engagement on the heights is alluded to further on, these stanzas are necessary to make the narrative complete.

BB.

Stanza CXVII.

"To thy shrine, Cologne."

In the MS. it is "iosquas Seinz," which has been generally understood to be the city of Sens on the Yonne. M. Gautier believes that the true reading is "jusqu'aux Saints," meaning the Saints of Cologne, the Rhine thus marking the eastern boundary of the France of Charlemagne. I follow M. Gautier, without venturing any opinion on the question.

CC.

Stanza CXLI.

"The Emir Galafir."

Galafir is an important person in the *chansons de geste* which deal with the earlier years of Charlemagne. He was the Saracen king with whom Karl was supposed to have taken refuge in his youth under the assumed name of Mainet, or Meinet. The Emir's daughter, as a matter of course, falls in love with him, and innumerable adventures arise therefrom. There is an early German poem ("Karl Meinet") devoted to this subject.

DD.

Stanza CLIV.

Captured Noples.

The capture of Noples, or Nobles, by Roland, is mentioned in the "Karlomagnus-Saga." It was taken by order of Charlemagne, but Roland transgressed the emperor's order, by putting to death the king, whom Karl wished to save. Roland caused the place where he slew him to be washed with water, to efface the mark of his blood (see Paris Hist. Poet, p. 263). In the present poem the whole seizure of the town is supposed to have been against the will of the emperor.

EE.

Stanza CXCIII.

"Ireland's Plain."

In the original, "Islande." Although almost all the commentators agree that Ireland, not Iceland, is meant, I at first literally followed the original. I did so, conceiving that Ireland was already named under the designation of Escoce or Scotia. But in the eleventh century the name of Scotia began to be appropriated to Scotland. The probability is, therefore, that the third country named is Ireland.

FF.

Stanza CXCVII.

I extract the following narrative of Roland's death from Caxton's "Life of Charlemagne" (in the library of the British Museum). It follows almost literally the pseudo-Turpin, and when we remember that this composition is at least half a century later in date than the "Chanson de Roland," we may gather how much the compiler of the Turpin was indebted to the *Chanson.*

"Rolland, the valyant champyon of the Crysten faith, was moche sorouful of the Crysten men by cause they had no socours. He was moche wery, gretely abasshed, moche affebled in his persone, for he had lost moche of his blode by his five mortal woundes, of which the leste of them was suffysaunt for hym to have dyed, and he had grete payne to get him out fro the Sarasyns for to have a lytel commemoracion of God tofore or the soule sholde departe fro his body. So meet he enforced hyror that he came to the fote of a mountayne nygh to the porte of Cezarye, and brought hymself nygh to a rock ryght by Roncyvale, under a tree in a fayre meadowe. Whan he sat doune in the grounde he behelde hys swerde, the best that ever was, namd durandel, which is as moche to say as giving an hard stroke,

which was ryght fayre and rychely made. The handle was of fyn beryl, shynyng mervayllously; it had a fayre crosse of gold in the which was wrytyn the name of Ihesus. It was so good and fyn that soner sholde 'the arme fayle than the swerde. He toke it out of the shethe, and saw it shine moche bryght; and by cause it sholde change his maister, he had moche sorowe in his hert, and wepying, he sayd in thys maner pitously: 'O Sword of Valure, the fayrest that ever was, thou wer never but fayr; ne never fonde I the but good: thou art long by mesure. Thou hast be so moche honoured thet alwaie thou barest with the the name of the blessed Ihesus, Savyour of the world, which hath endowed the with the power of God. Who may comprehend thy valure? Alas! who shall have thee after me? Whosomever hath thee shal never be vaynquished. Alwaye he shal have good fortune. Alas, what shal I moreover say for thee, good swerd. Many Sarasyns have ben destroyed by thee. Thynfydels and myscreauntes have ben slayn by thee. The name of God is exalted by thee. By thee is made the path of savement. O how many times hav I by thee avenged thynjurie made to God! O how many men have I smyttyn and cutte asondre by the myddle! O my swerde, whych has byn my comfut and my joy, whych never hurted persone that myght escape fro death. O my swerde, yf any person of noo value sholde have thee and I knew it, I shold dye for sorowe.' After thet Rolland had wepte ynough, he had fere that some paynim myght fynde it after hys deth, wherefor he concluded in hymself to breke it, and toke it and smote it upon a rocke wyth alle hys myght iii tymes withoute hurtynge onythynge the swerde, and clefte the rocke to the erthe, and colde in no wise breke the swerde. Whan he sawe the facyon, and coude do no more therto, he toke his horn whych was of yvorye, moche rychely made, and sowned and blewe it moche strongly, to the ende that yf there were ony Crysten men hydde in the wodes or in the waye of theyr retournynge, thet they shuld come to hym to fore they went ony ferther, and to fore he rendred his soule. Then seyinge that none came he sowned it ageyn, by soo grete force and vertu and

so impetuously, thet the horn roof a sondre in the myddle, and the vaynes of hys necke braken a sondre, and the synewes of hys body stratched. And that noyse, by the grace of God, came to the ear of Charles, whych was eyght mile fro hin.

GG.

Stanza CCVI.

"Much hath he learned who hath sorrow known," "*Mult ad apris ki bien conoist ahan.*"

Is not this the same idea as Goethe's?

"Wer nie sein brod mit thränen ass,
Wer nie die kummervollen nächte,
Auf seinem bette weinend sass,
Der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlishen mächte."

THE END.

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